THE ® saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

The Mummy of Cleopatra
by SAX ROHMER

Ocolio Nañigos
by WENZELL BROWN

Prince's Mixture
by AVRAM DAVIDSON

Adventure of the Blind Clairaudient
by AUGUST DERLETH

Harbor of Hate
by GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

## THE UNCURED HAM

A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

The happy Polynesian in the picture will be recognized on closer inspection as merely your Supervising Editor, celebrating the resurrection of this Magazine at the *Mai Kai* in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which is only the best of the luau and rum-drink emporia on this coast.

To all the old faithful readers who winced aloud at the atrocities of bad taste that were inflicted on this publication last year in a vulgar effort to jazz it up, I would like to say that my anguish was greater than anyone else's, and one of the best days of my life was when I was finally able to get THE SAINT back again from that management.

Nothing like that will happen again, I assure you. As you see, the Magazine is once more exactly the same as it was in the good old days: the same classic style of cover, the same dignity of inside format, the same quality of production.

Only the stories will be different, of course; but they will be of the same distinguished standard that we set in the beginning. For I am very glad to be able to announce that Hans Stefan Santesson, who picked them so well for so long, is back again as Editor. I know nobody whom I would rely on more confidently to choose the finest in mystery fiction, old or new—as our original slogan claimed, and we now claim again.

Our new publisher, Herbert Wiesenberg, has declared his ambition to restore THE SAINT to its former level—and then perhaps take it a little higher.

One of his first gestures has been to assume the subscriptions left over when publication ceased under the last regime, although he is not in any way liable for them. So, any of you who have unexpired subscriptions can expect to start receiving THE SAINT regularly again. And we hope that when the time comes you will send in your renewals.

One thing that this hibernation has achieved is that we are all set to start off with some opening menus that were worth waiting for. Santesson and I (who never stopped working) have built up a stock of stories, including brand-new Saint adventures, that we'll match against the best that you remember. Come in and try us.

Leslie Charteris

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Herbert Wiesenberg
*Publisher*

Leslie Charteris
*Supervising Editor*

Hans Stefan Santesson
*Editor*

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# the uncured ham

*by . . . Leslie Charteris*

**Of all the actors who have wanted to play Hamlet, not one ever had a break like this. . . .**

ONCE UPON a time there was in Sweden a *Stallmästar,* a master of the royal stables, whose lodge and dependencies were situated at the edge of a wooded park and a pretty lake only two miles north of the center of Stockholm. But even as far back as the middle of the 17th century such a choice location could not escape the covetous attention of more mercenary enterprise, and he was abruptly dispossessed in favor of an inn which, while still commemorating him sentimentally by calling itself *Stallmästaregården,* today features the hors-d'oeuvre table instead of the horse trough.

Once upon a much later time there was a thief in the United States who would have preferred to be an actor—or, if he had been giving his own version, an actor who was forced by lack of appreciation to become a thief. His name was Ernest Moldys, and it was the opinion of every producer for whom he had auditioned that he was a very bad actor indeed. It was, however, the consensus of many police departments that he was an excellent appraiser of jewels and a first-class burglar of houses, apartments, and hotel suites. These contradictory assessments had never

*Regrettably, there are bad-mannered tourists to be encountered everywhere. But they are not all foolish enough to be noticed by the Saint.*

convinced him, or discouraged him from declaiming long passages of Shakespeare whenever he could command an audience, which was usually in some tavern where he was buying drinks. Surmises were less unanimous as to whether he was obsessed with The Theatre for its own sake, or whether he was more lured by the putative fringe benefits of the profession—the international glamor queens whom he would professionally embrace and publicly escort, the swooning fans who would offer him their all for an autograph. He was certainly a dedicated dazzler of girls, the younger and more innocent the better; in fact, it was his too brilliant fascination, seduction, impregnation, and desertion of a teen-age beauty whom he found in a drama school which had achieved what a dozen detective bureaus had failed to do and put him to flight across the Atlantic to settle tentatively in Sweden, a country which will not extradite Americans on such locally incomprehensible complaints.

Once upon a yet more recent time, Simon Templar, who was known in many circles but fortunately for him not everywhere as "The Saint", chanced to be dining at an adjacent table at *Stallmästaregården* on the same night as Ernest Moldys had elected to take fodder at that hostelry.

"What I want," said Mr. Moldys aggressively, "is some of these 'crayfters'."

He was then still in his mid-thirties, and handsome enough in the pseudo-rugged way that appeals to advertising photographers commissioned to prove that even hairy-chested tattooed he-men can enjoy after-shave lotions. In lieu of personality he affected an aggressive manner developed from watching certain old television films and designed to impress his masculinity upon his consorts of the moment, whom he carefully selected for their youthful impressionability, like the round-faced flaxen-haired girl who accompanied him that evening.

"I am sorry," said the head waiter, "but the *kräftor* season does not begin until tomorrow."

*Kräftor* is the fresh-water crayfish which looks exactly like a four-inch miniature northern lobster, which is one of the most prized delicacies of Swedish gastronomy.

"I told you that when I told you about them, Ernest," said the girl, who looked as if she should have been doing her homework instead of going to dinner with such an obviously raffish date.

"I bet you can get them in America any time—if anyone wants 'em," said Mr. Moldys, implying that few people would condescend to do so.

"In Sweden the season is very short," said the head waiter apologetically. "It is only one month, beginning tomorrow, August the eighth."

"So what? So I made a mistake in the date. But that's only a few

hours away. What's the difference? Don't tell me you haven't got a stock in the kitchen right now, ready for opening day. So let's have some."

"I am sorry, but the law is very strict. We cannot serve *kräftor* before tomorrow."

Mr. Moldys glowered.

"That's why you'll be goddam squareheads all your lives," he said loudly.

The head waiter bowed icily and moved away, but Mr. Moldys continued to hold forth for some time on the shortcomings of Europe in general, Scandinavia in particular, and the Swedish nation especially, in a voice that was pitched for the attention not only of his companion but of half the other customers in the room. It went to the limits of embarrassment before he consented to let her soothe him, and switched on again the flashing smile for which too many foolish virgins had forgiven his tasteless tantrums.

Although Mr. Moldys tirelessly dramatized himself to an extent which had caused his privileged associates to nickname him "The Ham", it was one of his failings that he could not confine himself to the act of charm, but firmly believed that the paperback private-eye performance was even more important.

Simon Templar would have been glad to forget the foregoing exhibition as quickly as possible; but a hardly overstretched arm of coincidence encircling a comparatively small capital had him installed at a verandah table at lunch the very next day at the Restaurant Riche, which is one of the impeccably best in Stockholm, when it again scooped in Ernest Moldys, who was now bedazzling another potential juvenile delinquent with the same enticing figure and coloration as his admirer of the night before, but a slightly different facial arrangement.

By this time Mr. Moldys had lost interest in *kräftor* and wanted *smörgåsbord,* which he was told the restaurant was not serving that day.

"Are you nuts?" demanded Mr. Moldys indignantly. "All Swedish restaurants have smorgasbord. They do in America, anyway."

"In Sweden there was always *smörgåsbord* in the old days," said another head waiter politely. "But it is not so fashionable here any more. However, you are lucky. Today is the first day of the crayfish."

"Oh, we must have those, Ernest," said the nymphet. "They are wonderful—"

"I don't want any. I heard all about them yesterday, when I couldn't get any. Now I don't care if I never have one. I want smorgasbord."

"How about some herring, sir? We have several kinds, the same as you would find in *smörgåsbord.*"

"I had herring yesterday. I can't

eat it every day. For Chrissake, can't you ever get anything you want, when you want it, in this broken-down country? I know back-street delicatessens in New York that'd make this joint look sick."

Mr. Moldys was talking in the same intentionally public-address voice which he had used the night before; and as he glanced around to observe what attention he was getting, he caught Simon Templar's analytical eye on him, and was vain enough to honestly believe that he recruited himself an ally by turning on a brilliantly comradely smile.

"You know what I mean, don't you?" he said. "I can see you've been around. All this olde-worlde tradition and doing everything by the book—they're so far back, they don't even know they've been left behind! Don't you lose your mind sometimes?"

"Sometimes, I wonder why the natives don't lose theirs," said the Saint calmly. "Considering some of the things they have to put up with."

Ernest Moldys stared at him for several seconds with a strangely increasing uncertainty, and finally threw down his napkin with thinly disguised petulance.

"Let's get out of here, you beautiful Viking, and see if we can't get what we want somewheres else."

Simon saw the head waiter pick up the reservation slip that had been on their table, and beckoned him.

"What was that charming character's name?"

"A Mr. Moldys." The man showed him the paper. "You did not know him?"

"I wouldn't want to," said the Saint.

But this became untrue an instant after he said it; for the name, combined with something that had been vaguely familiar about the face, suddenly rang a bell in the complex circuits of Simon Templar's memory, which absorbed every item of criminal intelligence that touched it like a sponge, but had to be prodded in sometimes peculiar ways to squeeze the information back out again.

At this moment he recalled certain facts about Ernest Moldys which made him want very much to know more. There were, for instance, some details about the suicide of that sixteen-year-old starlet in Hollywood on which his recollection was hazy, to say nothing of the exact terms of a reward which had once been offered by the victims of one of Mr. Moldys' more remunerative depradations.

The Saint did not ordinarily feel that his mission required him to administer personal correctives to obnoxious American tourists whose misbehavior could supply gratuitous ammunition to the ever-watchful snipers at the free world, but this was a case where natural impulse and lofty objective combined irresistibly with sound busi-

ness practise. Once upon an earlier time the consequent leg work might have seemed discouragingly long-drawn and complicated, but in the age of electronic communications and jet aircraft it was almost no effort at all to a man who could sleep at any hour and altitude in a reclining seat like a child in a cradle. The Saint, who had nothing else planned for the weekend, merely took an SAS plane over the North Pole from Copenhagen to Los Angeles and returned by the same route, with his errands accomplished, in less time than it took Lindbergh to hobble from New York to Paris.

Ernest Moldys had done very well out of the last exercises of his vocation, but he also had very expensive tastes. These, like his other fickle appetites, were only partly genuine, another large part being dictated by his own conception of the way a stage or movie star such as he should have been would live. But the resulting pattern had made alarmingly rapid inroads on the folios of American Express travellers' checks into which he had contrived to convert most of his loot, and he only knew one trade that was likely to replenish them.

Therefore he listened with guarded but lively interest one evening when he was having a cocktail by himself in the bar of the Grand Hotel, and a tall and vaguely piratical-looking individual whose features were recently familiar came in with an older man who wore his dark suit and bifocals with the unmistakable patina of a high-priced attorney, and after ordering a couple of Peter Dawsons on the rocks they continued what must have been a lengthily waged discussion.

"What burns me," said the Saint, "is that this harpy tells the court she needs all that alimony just to live on, in the style to which I've accustomed her. And she gets it. I have to pay her a company president's income just to feed and clothe her, supposedly. And the next thing I know, she's financing a season of Shakespeare. Well, if she can afford that, she obviously doesn't need all that money to live on, and we ought to be able to get it reduced."

"I know how you feel, Mr. Hurley," said the legal type. "But it's her income now, and she can do what she likes with it."

"If she wants to play at being a producer, she could cash in some of her jewels. Must be more than a quarter of a million dollars I spent on them—and of course she kept 'em all. There was ninety thousand just for a string of little rocks to hang where she should have a rope. Why doesn't she hock them for capital?"

"They were part of the divorce settlement, Mr. Hurley. There's no law that says she has to dig into her capital for anything she can pay for out of income."

"Does that include gigolos? This

big nance that she's backing—with my money—nobody ever heard of him before. But she's going to make him a star. Even a California divorce-court judge couldn't be stupid enough not to see that she must have some other motive besides giving young genius a break."

"But you yourself called him a 'big nance'—and that's pretty common gossip. You don't seriously think you could convince anyone that they were having an affair."

"Frankly, that part of it baffles me. Enid has always been queer for actors, but at least she only flipped for the virile kind. When the next one of those comes along, that queer is going to wonder what hit him."

"Perhaps you should look forward to that, Mr. Hurley. She might marry the next one, if he's virile enough."

"She'd never be stupid enough to do that unless he earned more than she's getting from me. Not that that'd stop her having her fun. . . . It still gripes me. Enid Hurley, the great impresario, preparing to stand Copenhagen on its ear, dazzling 'em with my diamonds, taking over Kronborg Castle, yet, with my money!"

"Try not to think about it. Go down to Cannes and look at the bikinis."

"That's not what I interrupted your vacation for. I want you to try and *do* something."

"I've told you—"

"But she doesn't have a lawyer here, telling her. Go to Copenhagen and see her. Bluff her. Try to throw a scare into her. Tell her we're going to court to ask for a revision of the settlement. Tell her this proves she doesn't need so much alimony, which tell her the Court wouldn't give her for immoral purposes like subsidizing this swishy ham. Dress it up in all the phony legal gobbledegook, and if you do it well enough you might worry the hell out of her. Then offer to call it off if she'll agree to accept a nice fat cut."

"I don't think you've got a chance."

"Well, let *me* take that chance, will you? I can't let it go without trying. You might be able to convince her that she stands a good chance of ending up with nothing, if she fights it. She might even be tried for perjury or promoting vice or something. The arguments are your business. You'll be paid for it."

"It's not that I mind earning a fee, Mr. Hurley, but I can't conscientiously encourage you to spend your money with such a small prospect of getting anything in return."

"I'd rather do that than give it all to Enid without a struggle. And if you do swing it, you can bill me for a twenty-thousand-dollar bonus."

"Well," said the lawyer, glancing at his watch, "let's go to lunch and see if we can't improve our case just a little."

They paid their bill and departed, leaving Mr. Moldys with his ears still tingling, but not from the traditional eavesdropper's embarrassment. It was, rather, a warm glow of satisfaction that they had served him well, with a not inconsiderable assist from some possible guardian devil—a sensation that harmonized well with an equally symbolic itching of the fingers.

Mrs. Enid Hurley, a rich divorcée with jewels and a weakness for actors—it was a situation that might have been made for him. The only thought that failed to occur to him was that it had.

About all that was left for him to find out for himself was the name of the hotel where this precooked goose was laying its golden eggs, and in a city as small as Copenhagen this would normally have taken no more than a few phone calls after his arrival. For him, the catastrophic obstacle was in the word "arrival". The cynical counsellor who had advised him to take a cure overseas had handed him, for a disproportionate fee, a list of countries warranted to be salubrious for his ailment; but Denmark was not one of them. And thus, after only a few minutes' contemplation of this windfall that had been so extravagantly dumped in his lap, he found himself glaring at it with the obsessive acerbity of a shark which has discovered a succulent skin-diver cavorting in its dining depths, only to learn from an unpredicted bump on the nose that this mouth-watering morsel is protected inside a plastic bubble installed by the anti-shark experts of some camera crew shooting scenes for another submarine superscoop.

What this trauma might have done to the psyche of Ernest Moldys (he had tried to crash the marquees with more euphonious and star-sounding appellations, but had lately settled on the theory of honest down-to-earthiness: if Ernest Borgnine could win Academy Awards and Ernest Hemingway could cop Pulitzer Prizes, who could make cracks about Ernest Moldys?) is an interesting speculation, but it was not put to the final test, for after three days and nights of agonized frustration his sufferings were ended by precisely the kind of miracle he had been reduced to dreaming about.

As he entered his hotel and headed for the desk to ask for his key that auspicious afternoon, a woman hurried in front of him with a preoccupied flash of apology and commanded the attention of the uniformed incumbent with the bulldozing confidence of five generations of spoiled American wives behind her.

"I'm Mrs. Hurley," she proclaimed, with the clarity of royalty announcing itself. "Have you got me a driver yet?"

"A driver, Mrs. Hurley?" The attendant looked blank. "What

kind of driver did you want?"

"Do I have to go over all that again? I told you last night—"

"I was not on duty last night, madame."

"Well, whoever was here on the desk. I told him I needed someone to drive my car to Hälsingborg tomorrow, and he promised me he'd arrange it."

The attendant thumbed through a large ledger of scrawled notes, and began a muttered consultation with an assistant; and the woman looked at Moldys again.

"I'm sorry—don't let me hold you up. This is obviously going to take time!"

He gave her the most dazzlingly good-natured smile that he could achieve with his heart in his mouth, without letting it fall out. He was so staggered by his good fortune that he almost lost all the *savoir faire* on which he prided himself.

"Please—I'm not in any hurry."

"This is so aggravating. I thought I'd drive across from Hälsingborg and see some of the country, instead of flying, so yesterday I have to slip in the bathtub and fall down and crack my wrist." She raised a left hand which protruded from a small cast which had been hidden by the foulard sling in which she carried it. "Now I've got the problem of taking my car back. I suppose I *could* get along by myself somehow, but I might get into trouble, and it seems foolish to take a chance."

"I am sorry, madame," said the man behind the desk, "but I can find nothing about a driver. Perhaps when the night porter comes on duty—"

"But if I'm going to leave at all, I've got to leave first thing in the morning. If he hasn't done anything about it, somebody else had better get on the ball. Are you sure you looked under the right name? It's H-U-R-L-E-Y. Mrs. Enid Hurley."

"Yes, madame. But there is nothing here. Would you like me to try to find you a driver?"

At long last, Ernest Moldys regained full possession of his wits, and simultaneously of his voice. Although he was still finding it hard to believe that this was not all a wonderful dream, he knew exactly what had to be done and how to do it.

"Mrs. Hurley," he said, "if you won't think I'm being presumptuous, you have no problem. I'd be honored if you'd let me drive you to wherever you were going."

"Oh, but I couldn't possibly take up your time!"

Thus, after a little perfunctory argument and an interval of a few hours, she was seated with him at a window table on the Strand Hotel's roof terrace, overlooking the lights of half the city, while they toasted each other in various experimental flavors of *brännvin* over the prawn pancakes and debated amiably on the merits of each. It

was not even an ordeal for Mr. Moldys, for although she was considerably older than his usual choice, she was in such a superbly groomed and pampered state of preservation that she did not look a day older than himself. She had classic features and a *Vogue*-model figure, and her personality would have made the local chick whom he had sidetracked for the occasion look insipid beside her.

The only fault he had to find was that the diamonds he had heard so much about were not in evidence. As if sensing something critical in the way he had studied her evening finery, she fingered the costume necklace and bracelet set she was wearing, and said: "I'm afraid I'm not very dressy, for a place like this. But I only came for a couple of days, and since I was driving alone it didn't seem very smart to load all my baubles in the car, so I left them in the hotel safe in Copenhagen."

Moldys gallantly concealed his disappointment, although it seemed as if the luck which he thought had changed was turning dangerously coy again.

"A woman like you doesn't need jewels as much as they need her," he said, omitting to credit the writer from whom he had swiped the line.

Later in the meal, he learned for the first time that Hälsingborg, their destination on the west coast of Sweden, lay only two and a half miles across a narrow strait from the similarly named Danish town of Helsingör, which was practically a suburb of Copenhagen, a mere thirty miles from the Danish capital.

"Both sides used to be fortified," explained Mrs. Hurley, "and King Erik of Pomerania, who owned all the Scandinavian countries too, in those days, five or six hundred years ago, charged a toll on all the ships going through the Sound. It must have been quite a racket, because when Frederik II got to be King of Denmark he rebuilt the fort on his side into a fancy castle which he called Kronborg. It was finished about 1585, only fifteen years before Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* and made it the scene of a practically prehistoric legend. That's what they call poetic license, I guess."

"You sound as if you'd made a real study of it," he said admiringly.

"Well, naturally I'm interested. You see, I'm putting on a production of *Hamlet* there—of course, Helsingör is the place that Shakespeare called 'Elsinore'."

"What a wonderful idea, to do *Hamlet* right in the very place where it happened!"

"It probably never happened at all, and it certainly couldn't have happened there, as I've told you. But even the Danes have probably convinced themselves by now that it did. It isn't a new idea to put on the play there—people have been doing it since 1816. The challenge is to do it better."

"You know, I'd never have taken you for a producer."

"Because I'm not chewing a cigar? But I'm as tough as any of them, I hope."

"I refuse to believe it. At least not like most of the ones I can across."

"Don't tell me you're an actor!"

"I used to be, sort of." He was ad-libbing furiously now, not sure where he was going, but inspiredly sure that he was on the right track. "Nothing very important, you know. But some kind critics predicted a great future for me."

"What did you do?"

"I quit while I was ahead. I was on the verge of getting somewhere, when I inherited quite a bit of money, and the incentive to keep struggling was gone. But even now I can feel what it would mean to speak those lines in the place that Shakespeare himself was actually thinking of."

"Lots of 'em have done it—from Sir Laurence Olivier, way back in 1937 with Vivien Leigh, to Sir John Gielgud in '39, Sir Michael Redgrave in 1950, and Richard Burton in '54. He doesn't need to be knighted since they made him the King in *Camelot*. But I still see the part differently from any of them."

Mr. Moldys saluted her with another heartening measure of aromatic alcohol followed by the traditional beer chaser, and said:

*"This above all: to thine own self be true,*

*And it must follow, as the night the day,*

*Thou canst not then be false to any man."*

She looked at him with thoughtful interest.

"That was a nice reading," she said. "I've always thought Hamlet should be played something like *you* would naturally do it—as a real he-man trying to break out of a neurotic tradition, not a tormented introvert himself."

*"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,"* he said,

*"And thus the native hue of resolution*

*Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."*

"Exactly," she agreed. "Now, I've got a young actor who's physically just the way I visualize a Hamlet type, but temperamentally I'm beginning to worry about him."

Moldys was astute enough not to crowd his luck any harder at that moment, and in any case he wanted time to decide what to drive for. But he was exultantly certain that he had made a tremendous impression, and it was unthinkable that such a sequence of breaks could fail to climax somehow in a perfect payoff.

The Saint had a privileged insight into that psychology, having been the subject of it on several occasions himself.

Moldys played it with creditable restraint for the rest of the evening and through the following day's

long drive, devoting as much time as possible to the role of intelligent listener, sympathetic but disinterested, agreeable but authoritative, which demanded a minimum of effort but gave him the maximum space in which to wait for the decisive opening.

But in spite of all that, when they sat at dinner again the following night on the terrace of the newly completed Kärnan Hotel on the sea front of Hälsingborg, he began to experience some of the classic emotions of the mythical giant Tantalus (of whom he personally had never heard) whose name is immortalized in the word "tantalize", whose doom it was to be parched by eternal thirst while chained beside a pool which always playfully receded a millimeter beyond the utmost reach of his tongue. He had even developed a confident belief that he was attractive to her on the most downright sexual plane, and that was an angle from which he knew unlimited approaches. But between consummation and salvation, between all his tactical advances and her jewels, still lay those two-and-a-half miles of international water and the whimsies of international treaties. His lawyer, who was highly conscientious within his limits, had been most insistent on those technicalities.

Thus they looked at each other in a farewell atmosphere across a table which commanded the narrow strait separating them from the romantic turrets of Kronborg Castle, which was accommodatingly floodlit, and sighed with appropriate appreciation, and she could say: "I just hope everything will work out all right. I'm taking on such a big thing on my own. I mustn't even begin to doubt what I'm doing."

Ernest Moldys took a big chance, from desperation, and leaned forward to try another quote, in his best voice:

*"Doubt thou the stars are fire,*
*Doubt that the sun doth move,*
*Doubt truth to be a liar,*
*But never doubt I love . . ."*

"You must believe in what you're doing, Mrs. Hurley," he covered himself hastily.

"Sometimes that isn't so easy." She continued to stare at him with an air of discovery. "I talk very big and independent, but it's a lonely business."

"I'll be waiting to read the notices, and I'm sure they'll be great."

"Don't talk as if you'd be a million miles away. You've got to come to the opening. In fact, since you've come this far, why don't you come over with me and see what we're doing?"

"I can't." He had to think of a reason quickly, and perhaps automatically clutched at a recent memory for inspiration. "My attorney is arriving from New York tomorrow to see me about some important business, and I must be back in Stockholm to meet him."

She grimaced.

"Don't talk to me about lawyers —I left Copenhagen to get away from one who was trying to blackmail me, in a strictly professional way. Packed an overnight bag and drove on to the ferry at Helsingör without telling anyone where I was going. I'm hoping by this time he'll 've gotten tired of cooling his heels in my hotel waiting for me to come back."

Unlike Moldys, she did not have to improvise any of her explanations, for the creation of cover stories was one of the Saint's greatest specialties, and when he had polished one there was seldom a crevice in it for any question that had not been anticipated and prepared for.

He found her more attractive than ever that night, even if his primary impetus was provided by the magnetism of the diamonds which still reposed in a hotel safe a few infinite miles away, and his wooing might have become troublesome if she had not been able to plead that her cracked wrist was aching and throbbing in a way that would have completely inhibited her from responding with all the enthusiasm that such an occasion deserved. The Saint had not overlooked that hazard either.

The restless night that Moldys spent, however, was due to less romantic discouragement. In spite of all the auspices, the chariot of fortune seemed to have ended its delirious gallop in a morass of pure glue.

He was finishing a gloomy breakfast in the dining room next morning when Enid Hurley came in, and even across the room her face told him that something new and dire had been added to the situation.

"You'll never guess," she said incontrovertibly, as she reached his table.

"What?"

"You remember that lawyer I mentioned last night? Well, he was hired by my ex-husband to pester me. So this morning I thought, before I actually went back, it might be smart to call my secretary in Copenhagen and find out if he was still hanging around. And you know what I find out?"

"No."

"He's gone, all right. But while I've been away, since he couldn't work on me, it seems he went to work on my actor, and got him so scared that he's quit and flown back to Hollywood. So here I am, scheduled for an opening in ten days, with no leading man."

"That's terrible," said Moldys uncertainly.

"It's worse than that! It's such a cheap victory for that bastard I was married to. He's made me look ridiculous in front of the whole world. And there's nothing I can do about it. You don't replace a sensational Hamlet overnight."

She stared at him as if she was going to burst into tears. But in-

stead of saline solution, her eyes slowly filled with a strange inspirational light. Suddenly she pointed a finger like a sword.

*"You,"* she breathed.

"What?" said Ernest Moldys, drawing a total blank ir what should have been his climactic moment.

"You could play Hamlet," she said. "The way I visualized it. Better than that weak-kneed fop who walked out. You *must* do it, Ernest!"

Moldys moistened his lips and swallowed hard to hold down his bouncing aorta. He had a buzzing in his ears and a feeling of vertigo that made him hold on to the table to keep the room from spinning.

It is not for nothing that an overenthusiastic actor is vulgarly referred to as a ham. In the opinion of this etymologist, the term has neither anatomical nor dietetic connotations, but is simply an abbreviation of "Hamlet", the part which supposedly symbolizes the pinnacle of histrionic ambition. And if the perfect illustration of this theory were called for, no better example could be cited than Mr. Ernest Moldys.

And now it seemed as if the miracle in which he had almost lost faith had at the last moment answered its last mysterious cue and handed him the ultimate rôle on what would have been conventionally called a silver platter by anyone who was not more practically fascinated by its incrustation of diamonds.

"You must do it," Enid Hurley was pleading. "For me. You can start rehearsing tomorrow. You know the lines already, I'm sure. You can phone your attorney in Stockholm, and tell him to fly over and meet you in Copenhagen instead. If it means any extra expense, I'll take care of it. Between us, we'll show 'em. Please, Ernest, tell me you will!"

With her impassioned eagerness and stark naked need, it was not hard for Mr. Moldys to forget that she was a comparatively old bag. Perhaps, he reflected (if he was capable just then of reflecting so coherently) he had too long been squandering his talent for seduction. At any rate, with everything else considered, the prospective change of pace was in no way deterrent.

Rising at last to his moment of truth, he leaned forward and covered her hand caressingly.

"Enid," he said, "for you, I'll do it. *'The play's the thing . . .'"*

Simon Templar was unable this time to take the usual bows for the script he had written, because he thought it advisable to stay well out of sight until Ernest Moldys was far off the ferry and irrevocably committed to Danish soil.

Moldys was allowed to drive a little way from the dock before a

uniformed guard stopped him and asked for his passport.

The guard handed the passport to a large dour individual in plain clothes who loomed up behind him.

At the same moment, a spectacled American-legal type whom Moldys abruptly recognized appeared on the other side of the car and opened the door. Before he had finished resolving the conclusion that this could only be the attorney of Mrs. Hurley's ex-husband who had not given up after all but had been lying in wait with some new scheme of harassment, Mrs. Hurley had slipped nimbly out of the adjoining seat and was hurrying away, with the supposed pestering lawyer making no attempt to detain or follow her.

The plain-clothes man put the passport in his pocket and said stiffly: "Mr. Moldys, I am of the Danish State Police. We have been asked by the American Government to hold you for extradition. You are under arrest."

The American lawyer leaned over to exhibit an identification card in a small plastic case. It bore his photograph and the insignia of the Department of Justice. He said: "I expect I'll be taking you back, Hambo."

Mr. Moldys was too devastated even to feel insulted.

"Who set me up?" he croaked.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said the Federal agent virtuously.

Ernest Moldys would have been prematurely enlightened if he had witnessed the reunion of Mrs. Hurley with the piratical-looking man who had last been heard speaking of her so vindictively, around the corner of an adjacent building.

"You must have been magnificent," Simon Templar said, and hugged her. "At this point I've a good mind to bow out and let you collect all of the reward."

"I wouldn't want that," she said. "I only tried to lead up to everything exactly the way you coached me. I never thought I could do it. I told you I never did any professional acting myself. It was my daughter who had all the talent. I'm the one who'd be very happy to bow out now."

The Saint shook his head.

"I'm afraid that's impossible. You'll certainly have to testify on the charges involving him. And frankly, it should be worth something to see the Ham's performance when he finds out why he shouldn't have avoided meeting the parents of that girl in the drama school that he gave such a shoddy deal to. At the very least, he would have known your real name was different from the stage label she was using."

# the adventure of the blind clair-audient

*by . . . August Derleth*

"Ah," murmured Solar Pons from where he stood at the window of No. 7B, looking down into Praed Street, "I fancy we are about to have the offer of a case. What a pity I shall not be able to take it!"

I interrupted our packing for a holiday on the Continent and came over to his side to follow the direction of his gaze. A cab stood at the kerb, and, getting out of it were an elderly lady and her companion, a man of thirty-odd years.

"She must be quite infirm," I ventured. "See how she depends on her companion."

Pons chuckled. "No, Parker, she is blind. Observe the way she holds her head—she doesn't look down for the kerb, and her companion walks slightly in advance of her, guiding her steps."

"You didn't mention an appointment."

"I have none, so I am free to listen to the problem the lady is bringing to me."

"Why not the young man?"

"Oh, come, Parker! Why would a blind woman put herself to such trouble if only for a companion perfectly able to tell us his own

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*Solar Pons was born in Prague about 1880, the son of a British consular official. A member of the Diogenes, Savile, Athanaeum and Cliff Dwellers, he established his private inquiry practise at 7B Praed Street in 1907. We suggest that, for further details, you apply to the author of these pastiches, to "delightful in concept and Execution" (to quote Anthony Boucher).*

story? No, the problem is hers. . . . Ah, they have roused Mrs. Johnson."

In a few moments our estimable landlady knocked gently on our door, then opened it and stuck her honest, scrubbed face, surmounted by coils of heavy hair, into the room.

"A lady to see you, Mr. Pons."

"Send her in, by all means, Mrs. Johnson," said Pons.

Mrs. Johnson withdrew, swinging the door wide as she did so, revealing our prospective client and her companion. She did not now seem either so aged or infirm as I had taken her to be at first sight. She was a stout woman of about sixty-five. Her hair was greying, but the skin of her face was curiously little lined and had a kind of translucence, heightened by the black glasses which concealed her eyes. Led by her companion, a young red-haired man with a mottled skin and bushy brows over pale blue eyes, she stepped into the room.

"Mr. Pons," she said uncertainly. "Mr. Solar Pons?"

"Pray be seated," said Pons, motioning her companion to a chair.

"I am Lily MacLain, Mr. Pons. You may have seen my card in the papers."

"I've seen your card, Miss MacLain. 'Clairaudient Readings.' On Oakley Street, just around the corner from Cheyne Walk."

"I've been in Chelsea ever since I did a turn on the stage," said our client. "It's a good place for anyone with what they're beginning to call extra-sensory powers. This good young man is my nephew, Theodore Holt. He has served as my eyes since he came to live with me three years ago—after the most faithful of companions died."

"I daresay your problem hardly pertains to the future, if you can read it," said Pons.

"Well, Mr. Pons, I do read the future. I do, indeed." She spoke slowly, as if she were choosing her words with care. "But there are limitations under which we all fall —all of us who have the gift. And the principal one is that few of us —very few of us—are ever able to penetrate the veil when it comes to ourselves. That picture seldom comes clear—it remains murky. But for others, no. For instance, Mr. Pons, I can tell you that you will soon solve an extraordinary series of crimes in which a bird serves as an accomplice to a murderer; you will be asked to investigate another series of murders involving a suspected werewolf; you will be instrumental in exposing a rather well-known doctor who has successfully done away with one wife and is only thwarted by your good offices in doing away with his second. But if I were to step out into the street within the hour only to be run down by a cab, I could not in all probability foresee it."

Pons' eyes twinkled; the ghost of a smile touched his lips. "But you

haven't come here to expound upon my future, Miss MacLain."

"No, Mr. Pons. On mine. I want to pose an unusual problem for those talents which are especially yours. I'm not without funds. People pay well for my services. So few are content to let the evil be; they want it lifted. I am as well prepared to pay for your services as most of them are for mine. In short, Mr. Pons, I want you to avenge me."

"In what connection?"

"I want you to see to it that my murderer is punished."

Pons' eyes danced. "You anticipate being murdered?"

" 'Anticipate' is not quite the word, Mr. Pons. Let us say rather that I will be murdered. It is not my future I've read. I've heard the voices. And they speak of murder."

"Let us start at the beginning, Miss MacLain," suggested Pons.

Our client pursed her lips thoughtfully. "I suppose you might say it began when I did a reading for a man who called himself Alistair Green. I say 'called himself' because many people fail to give their real names. He had marital difficulties, and I saw no future for him with his wife. In fact, I saw danger for him if he remained with her. Evidently he went home and began an argument which resulted in her leaving him. As a consequence, he developed a strong hatred for me; like most weak men, he tried to put blame for his own shortcomings elsewhere. He came to see me again and again—usually he had been drinking—and once he created such a disturbance, in the course of which he threatened me, that Theodore had to take care of him. Isn't that true, Theodore?"

"Yes, Aunt Lily," said her companion. "Mr. Pons, he threatened to kill my aunt."

"After which, of course, Theodore threw him out."

Her nephew nodded in confirmation. "He came five times in all—so far. He'll come again."

"Perhaps it is needless to say," said our client, "that we looked up Alistair Green at the address he had given us, but his address was as false as his name."

"Did you lodge information with the police?" asked Pons.

Our client shook her head with a faint smile. "Could they do any more than we did?"

"But *you* could have described him, Mr. Holt," pressed Pons.

"Mr. Pons, he came by night. My aunt keeps her place dimly lit for atmospheric reasons. I saw him, yes. He was short, blonde, with hair closely trimmed; he wore a moustache and he looked to be a sporty type—not the kind who usually consults my aunt."

Pons looked quizzically at Lily MacLain. "Would it not be simpler to apprehend this man and turn him in for having threatened you?"

"No, Mr. Pons. The police have never been kind to those of us who

have the gift. They would dismiss such a charge brought by one in my calling, since in their eyes no very great crime was committed. I would only end up by angering him so much more."

"So you feel he is earnest enough in his threat to eventually carry it through?"

"Mr. Pons, I will die."

She said this as calmly as if she had long been resigned to it.

"Why need this be so?" pressed Pons. "In the face of warnings?"

"Mr. Pons, it will happen. A knife will be used. I invite your particular attention to the weapon. This man will come to my house in the night. As a result of his coming, I will die. You ask about 'need'. I can do nothing to prevent it. I'm not asking your pity; I ask only simple justice."

I could not help interrupting, not, I fear, without a trace of skepticism in my voice. "How can you know this, Miss MacLain?"

"Dr. Parker, I can understand the profound doubt of a medical man," our client answered. "Sir, in my calling, as I have said, we are unable to read our fate. But in projecting ourselves into the future through our gift, there is a point at which we lose awareness of ourselves; after that point we cease to exist. I am not aware of myself very far in the future."

"A police guard might be obtained for your home," I suggested.

"The police are needed on far more tangible difficulties than mine," said the clairaudient. "Mr. Pons, can I count on you?"

"At the moment, Dr. Parker and I are off to the Continent. Perhaps I can call on you on our return?"

"Thank you."

She extended one arm for her nephew and, supported by him, came to her feet. Then she bade us good-afternoon.

Once our client had gone, I could not prevent my protest from bursting forth. "I have a particular dislike for charlatanry of this kind, Pons—all this sort of clairvoyance, fortune-telling, palm-reading, and the like. It is all nonsense, designed to prey upon the hopes and fears of the ignorant."

"Who demand to be preyed upon," added Pons. "A healthy skepticism is a good attribute. I like to keep an open mind. One can never be positive in matters of this kind, however rational it seems to deny out of hand the manifestations of the so-called supernatural or extra-sensory."

"Pons, this woman's story was a rigmarole of the ridiculous," I cried. "Fancy retaining someone to avenge a murder not yet committed!"

"I am not nearly so positive as you, Parker. You have a happy faculty for seeing only the evidence which supports your prejudices. I can hardly afford such a luxury."

"Pons, you cannot believe this woman has foreseen her death!"

"She is certainly convinced that

she will be murdered," replied Pons. "As to whether she has foreseen it in the reprehensible manner you infer—that is another matter. She has some reason quite beyond the clairaudience in which she professes to be adept. She has been actively threatened in the presence of at least one witness besides herself. On that score, her fears are not entirely groundless."

"A thousand persons are threatened for every one who is done to death," I said.

"Perfectly true, my dear fellow. It did not strike you, then, that there was something cogently convincing about Miss MacLain's appeal?"

"Not in the slightest."

"Did it occur to you that she may have had some ulterior motive in coming to me?"

"Perhaps."

"What, then, could it be?"

I shrugged. "You are the expert on ratiocination, Pons. Not I."

"Which makes it all the more a puzzle that you, who are not, should think her guilty of some ulterior motive. It suggests nothing to you that she avoids the police?"

"She explained that herself. The police, like myself—very wisely, too, if I may say so—have a natural distrust of charlatans."

"Let me put it this way—it does not seem to you that she may distrust the police as much as they may distrust her and that therefore she has come to me convinced that if she is slain the police are entirely likely to bungle the solution of her murder?"

I laughed. "Forgive my laughter," I said.

"My dear Parker, it reassures me." He smiled himself. "Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of this little problem which delight and challenge me. I believe it is the first time in all my years of making private enquiries that the victim of a murder . . ."

"A projected murder," I put in.

"Very well, a projected murder," agreed Pons imperturbably. "It is the first time that the victim has retained me to solve her murder before it has taken place."

"Pons, do you honestly expect her to be murdered?"

"I should not be inordinately surprised if her death by violence came about."

"As she has predicted?"

"Let us say, more or less as she has predicted."

"Pons, this is fantastic!" I cried. "That you, of all people, who rationalize everything, should be taken in by a type of predatory charlatan who is quite common the length and breadth of England!"

"Our client has been faced with certain premises and has drawn certain conclusions from them. Her clairaudience has played only a minor part in the matter. She has now laid before us these same premises, and it is plain to see that each of us has drawn diametrically

different conclusions from them. But let us examine this little matter of clairaudience. What do you conceive it to be, Parker?"

"Simply stated, it is said to be the ability to hear sounds which are ordinarily beyond hearing. It is the aural equivalent of clairvoyance, which is presumed to be the ability to see events beyond the perception of others."

"By that definition a man whose ears are attuned to certain high-pitched voices—like those of birds and frogs—not commonly heard by other men, would be clairaudient?"

"Well, not exactly."

"Or a dog, that hears whistles which make no sound to our ears when we blow them, is then a clairaudient?"

I protested in exasperation. "No, no, it isn't like that at all. It's hearing something which could not possibly be heard! Like voices from next week or a conversation in another city, like those conversations from the future of which Miss MacLain spoke but a short time ago. You know very well what clairaudience is."

"Indeed, I do. But do you? I submit that it is perfectly possible for one person to be far more developed in one sense than most of the people who surround him. And this is particularly true of those who have to rely on the senses that remain to them after the loss of one —especially one so important as sight."

"I don't deny it. But I draw the line at someone who pretends to hear voices from the future. Lily MacLain professes to do so. She has said as much in so many words in our presence. You've heard her—so have I. This is charlatanry."

"Why? Because *you* do not have this gift?"

"Not at all. Because it refutes science!"

"Strong words, Parker! Strong words! Let us just say it goes against what we know of science at this point in the development of man."

"That is strong enough for me."

"And if science next week or next year or a half century hence uncovers a perfectly logical explanation for clairaudience in its currently most reprehensible form—I use the terminology your attitude suggests—then you, too, will subscribe to it?"

"Certainly."

Pons chuckled. "I must admit your attitude is scarcely different from that of those of our ancestors who proclaimed, 'This golden calf is All!' or 'This stone image is All!' or 'God is All!' In your case it is Science that is to be worshipped. Scientist though I take pride in being, I would be the last to suggest that our scientific discoveries to date have reached such a stage of perfection that we have achieved ultimate knowledge and no further advances are open to us."

"I've said no such thing!" I protested vehemently.

"You inferred it. But our problem here does not depend solely upon the issue of clairaudience," he went on. "We have a tangible potential murderer in the fellow who calls himself 'Alistair Green', and we have certain keys to his identity, despite Miss MacLain's pessimism. His wife has recently left him, and we know that he is a man who is slight of stature, light of weight, and much given to anger and bluster."

"How do you arrive at stature and weight, if I may ask?"

"You had a good look at our client's companion. Would you say he could be described as husky?"

"Hardly."

"Yet he 'threw Green' out of the house on Oakley Street. 'Green' must therefore be of even less weight and slighter of stature than Mr. Holt."

"Of course! I should have seen something so elementary."

"The most astonishing feats of ratiocination in the history of mankind seem elementary upon elucidation of the steps between premise and conclusion," observed Pons.

"But all that is hardly enough to put you on 'Green's' trail."

"True. But did it not strike you that our client was not anxious that we *should* be set upon his trail?"

"Now that you mention it, she didn't seem particularly enthusiastic."

"So that, in effect, our client may have what the psychoanalytical gentlemen in your department would call 'the death-wish'. If she does not actively wish to die, she is resigned to the idea of death. Her wish is not for me to prevent the event she foresees—take note—but to avenge it. Does this not strike you as singular?"

"Far-fetched, but not singular."

"Indeed! I submit it is one of the most provocative little puzzles I have ever had put before me. Time will tell us its meaning. I confess to some concern for Miss MacLain. Perhaps we could shorten our holiday by a week."

As we were stepping out of our cab in the early morning hours of a day just a week later, our landlady, who had been expecting us and had evidently been waiting upon our arrival, came hurrying down the steps of 7B, and called out, "You'll want that cab, Mr. Pons."

"Indeed!" said Pons.

"Inspector Jamison just left word you were to step around to Miss MacLain's house on Oakley Street," explained Mrs. Johnson.

Pons flashed me a cryptic glance. "We are too late," he said. "Take our bags into the vestibule, Parker, and we'll be off."

Inspector Jamison waited for us in the house on Oakley Street, enthroned in self-importance in the ornate parlor, which was furnished

in quasi-Victorian fashion. Theodore Holt, manifestly dejected, sat silent nearby in the room to which the constable at the door admitted us.

"Well, Pons," said Jamison, "your late client has been murdered in the manner she told you she would be. We have the murderer, but in view of her application to you, Mr. Holt here insisted that we should send for you."

Pons turned to our late client's nephew. "Perhaps we may hear from Mr. Holt just what took place."

Holt looked up haggardly. "Certainly, Mr. Pons. I was awakened at just about midnight by an unusual sound. It was probably the breaking in of the window in my aunt's bedroom, but for a while then as I lay awake I heard nothing. Then my aunt stirred in her bed. I heard her call out, 'Is that you, Ted?' So I slipped out of bed at once, knowing she'd heard something I hadn't. I was on the stairs when I heard a kind of muffled blow. Aunt Lily groaned. I ran into her room to find this fellow bending over her bed. I had armed myself with a poker. I struck him—hard."

"Green?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons. That's what he called himself."

"Oh, he coshed him, all right, Mr. Pons," said Jamison. "He was still out when we got there. We've only just sent him away."

"I'm sorry to say I was too late to save my poor aunt," concluded Holt. "Her visit to you was prophetic, Mr. Pons—more prophetic than I dreamed."

Pons listened attentively to this recital, and for a few moments stood in that attitude of deep thought so characteristic of him—head sunk on chest, eyes closed, the fingers of his right hand stroking his ear lobe. Then he stirred, his eyes opened, he looked at Jamison.

"Let us just have a look at the bedroom."

"Look all you like, Pons. It can't do any harm."

Holt came to his feet. "This way, Mr. Pons."

The adjoining bedroom was in disarray. The bed particularly was much disturbed. The body of Lily MacLain had been removed, but bloodstains lay in mute testimony to the crime which had taken place there only a few hours before. A window across the room from the bed in which the blind woman had lain had been opened by means of a pane broken in so that a hand could reach through and get at the lock; glass still lay on the sill and the carpet. It was the sound of this breakage which had undoubtedly awakened both Lily MacLain and her nephew.

"Where did you find her murderer?" Pons asked Jamison.

"Right there beside the bed, Pons. Just where he fell when Mr. Holt struck him."

"Who is the fellow?"

"His name's Jasper Howells. Employed by Instow & Son as a bookkeeper. Wife recently left him. He's been around here several times. Had too much to drink each time. He admits that."

"Ah, you've had a statement from him?"

"Oh, yes. He came around before we took him in."

"He denied he had killed Miss MacLain, of course."

"Not in so many words, though most of them do. Said he couldn't remember all he'd done. He said he had called on his victim at half after ten—not half past eleven, the time he killed her. You could still smell liquor on him, and he talked like it, though it was a pretty sharp blow Mr. Holt gave him. He's got a skull fracture. If he hadn't been so hardheaded, he'd have been killed. He claims he fell into a stupor here and can't remember what happened. A very common defense, if I may say so—he's setting it up for his line at the trial. But Mr. Holt tells me Miss MacLain told you about his threatening her, Pons."

"True. If this is the same man who gave her the name 'Alistair Green'."

"It is, Mr. Pons," put in Mr. Holt.

Pons turned to him. "Tell me, Mr. Holt, is there anyone else who might have had enough animosity against your aunt to wish her dead?"

"I cannot say, sir, but I doubt it very much," Holt said somewhat reluctantly.

"I observe that you hesitate, Mr. Holt. Who is it?"

Holt attempted a weak smile. "There was a middle-aged man who had paid some attention to Aunt Lily. I believe he'd proposed to her. She spurned him. It upset him badly, and he talked a little wildly. But I'm sure he entertained no real animosity."

"When was this?"

"Oh, six weeks ago. He used to come here for readings at first. He'd been coming for all of seven years, Aunt Lily told me. She foretold his wife's death three years ago, and other little things."

Pons crossed to the window and looked out.

"Of course," continued Holt, "there were people who were dissatisfied with Aunt Lily's readings. There are always those. They go away disgruntled, sometimes angry, and sometimes they come back to tell her so. I could set down a list, if you like. But once they've got it off their minds, so to speak, they've done it and they forget all about it."

"A low window," murmured Pons. "The room is easy of access. The walk below would effectively eliminate footprints."

Jamison smiled indulgently.

"We've been all about the place, Pons. Fine tooth comb, you might say. Now, in regard to what Miss

MacLain told you a week ago—you'll be available for the trial, Pons?"

"Certainly, if the prosecution is generous enough to accept the testimony of amateurs."

"Oh, you amateurs sometimes do us a little service or two, Pons," said Jamison with unwonted generosity.

"Your flattery touches me, Inspector," said Pons, and turned again to Holt. "What is the name of that middle-aged fellow who was attentive to your aunt?"

"Gerald King, sir."

"Where can he be found?"

"He lives nearby. Over on Flood Street. Number 71."

"We've already had a go at him, Pons," said Jamison. "He denies he was turned down. Just the opposite. It would trouble his vanity to admit being turned down, wouldn't it? Some of these middle-aged fellows are touchy."

"Quite, quite," murmured Pons. "Now, if you don't mind, I'll just have a look around. The kitchen, I take it, lies at the back of the house?"

"This way, Mr. Pons," said Holt, starting from the room.

In the kitchen Jamison pointed to a carving knife on the table. "It was that kind of knife with which he killed her, Pons. Set of two."

"He used Miss MacLain's knife?"

"Oh, it was no risk coming out here to get it. She was blind, you'll remember."

"True, true. You have the weapon, of course?"

"Certainly, Pons."

"You've examined it for fingerprints?"

"That's being done. But I can tell you Howells' prints are on it as clear as they need be—to the naked eye—written in her blood."

Pons stood again in deep thought, his eyes partly closed. His fine nostrils trembled, and the entire expression on his feral face was that of a keen-scented animal hard on the track of prey. When he opened his eyes again, he gave the kitchen only a cursory glance. He gazed at Jamison.

"They'll be putting Howells through it at the Yard," he said. "Let me suggest you lose no time advising them to pay close attention to his fingertips—all sides."

Jamison favored him with a blank stare. "Oh, come, Pons," he said at last, "we've got him. Very full prints."

"I suggest you lose no time, Jamison," said Pons icily. "Evidence may be destroyed. At any time they may permit Howells to wash his hands. Get on the telephone and have a report sent back here without delay. Dust his nails, Jamison—his nails."

"The telephone's in here, Inspector," said Holt.

When Inspector Jamison returned, Pons asked, "What of the weapon? It was not found in the victim's body, I take it?"

"No. It was on the floor, next to Howells. By the look of it, he'd struck her once; not knowing whether it was fatal, he was about to strike her again, when Holt's blow dropped him. He let go of the knife."

"I assumed as much," said Pons.

"If I could have been only a few moments sooner," lamented Holt miserably.

"Never mind, sir," said Jamison. "You couldn't know."

"But she had been threatened! I should have been down without delay. He wouldn't have had time to find the knife then."

Pons now busied himself with a close examination of the kitchen, and then again the bedroom. He was still at this half an hour later when the call Jamison expected came through from Scotland Yard. Pons stood listening, the ghost of a smile on his face.

Jamison put down the telephone and turned a perplexed face to Pons. "Prints on the nails, Pons," he said.

"Identifiable?"

"Yes. But not identified. No record."

Pons turned to Holt. "Will you bring me a glass, Mr. Holt—an ordinary water glass?"

"Certainly, sir."

Holt slipped into the kitchen and back, carrying a water tumbler.

"Just hand it to Inspector Jamison, Mr. Holt. . . . Carefully now, Jamison. Just compare those prints with the prints found on Howells' nails."

For an instant Jamison froze. The tableau held—Jamison stared at Pons, the expression on Holt's face melted. Then the scene exploded—Holt struck the glass from Jamison's hand, shattering it, and in the next instant dove for the window. But Pons was upon him with the litheness and speed of a cat and brought him to the floor.

"I give you the murderer of Lily MacLain, Jamison," said Pons, panting.

"But how did you come to this, Pons?" asked Jamison, still shaken, after Holt had been removed by two constables.

"If Lily MacLain was stabbed only once, and Howells was felled in the act of attempting to stab her again, how could it be that his prints can be found *in her blood* on the handle of the knife?" Pons shook his head. "No, Jamison, it won't wash. Howells helped to set himself up for the charge, but he isn't guilty. Holt killed her after he struck Howells down, then rolled Howells' prints on to the handle of the knife. And isn't it a little far-fetched to believe that a man bent on murder would come without a weapon?"

"But what reason had Holt for killing his aunt?"

"He had the strongest of motives. As his aunt's only heir, he would lose her not inconsiderable estate if she married, as evidently she

contemplated doing. If you'll proceed on the assumption that Holt did not tell the truth, and that Howells and Gerald King *are* telling the truth, all the pieces of this little puzzle will fall into place. Spilsbury will supply all the scientific evidence you need."

"Extraordinary," I said, as we left the house on Oakley Street. "Yet the affair offers clear proof of the fallibility of Lily MacLain's clairaudience."

"Miss Lily MacLain's clairaudience may have been considerably more brilliant than either of us is prepared to admit," answered Pons.

"Prescience there was, certainly," I went on, "which is the mark of ordinary intelligence; there's nothing extra-sensory about it. But why did she come to us? And why, if she were not fallible, did she accuse Howells—or, by the name he used, 'Green'?"

"I fail to recall that she did," answered Pons as he hailed a cab coming past in the dawn light. "I submit, Parker, that she told us, as well as she could, that her nephew planned to murder her and put it on someone else."

"Oh, come, Pons!" I cried in protest.

We got into the cab and Pons did not speak for a few moments. Then he answered. "Part of the faculty of observation is a keen ear. You failed to listen. She said 'Green' had threatened her. He had begun to make fairly regular visits and created scenes. He usually did this when he was under the influence, which made him all the easier for Holt to handle. Now, I put it to you, Parker, that a man who means to kill very seldom goes out of his way to warn his victim; no, with each visit to annoy Lily MacLain, Howells was increasingly less likely to kill. Do you fancy our late client was unaware of this? I daresay not."

"Pons, I distinctly recall her saying she would die by his hand."

"No, no, Parker. You didn't listen carefully. She said she would be murdered. She said, 'A knife will be used. This man will come to my house in the night.' She did *not* say he would kill her. Her exact words were, 'As a result of his coming, I will die.' So she did.

"That she could have done more to prevent her death, I have no doubt. Why she did not must remain a puzzle. Her nephew served as her eyes. She did nothing without him. As she had depended upon that companion who died, she now depended upon him. Soon it became subtly altered—she could do nothing without his permission, she could not escape him even when she sensed that his greed for her possessions was overpowering, and her clairaudient powers—or intuition, if you like—told her he would attempt her life. Howells' loud threats gave her the chance to come here, and her nephew fell in with her plan because he knew how well

it would serve him. Having thus set the stage, as he thought, Holt had only to wait until Howells came again, then keep him there until he was ready to do his shameful deed."

"Intuition, then—not clairaudience," I said.

"Was it intuition or extra-sensory power which caused her to invite my particular attention to the means of her death: the knife? It is folly to believe that anyone bent on killing another would put himself in the position of searching an unfamiliar house for a weapon instead of bringing his own. It will not be given to either of us to decide whether or not she was genuinely clairaudient," finished Pons enigmatically. "I fancy Lily MacLain will have the final word, Parker."

This, in the succession of cases which came to Pons' attention in the following months — among them those foreseen by Lily MacLain — she did.

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## INSTRUCTIONS

Fouché, Minister of Police under Napoleon, was negotiating for a separate peace with the British behind the Emperor's back. One day he called to see Urbain Leroi, a young man he had been saving for such a moment. He was sending him to England.

"Here are authentic documents which prove you to be the descendant of one of the noblest families in Dauphine. Do not be afraid that your namesake will dispute your rank and title; he has been dead these dozen years, and his father, mother, uncles are in their graves. You must repair to Havre with this passport, which purports to be delivered by me to the ex-Vicomte de D—. When you get to Havre, read this note, which will direct you in what way you are to proceed to England. On your arrival in London, go immediately to the minister for foreign affairs. As soon as you are in his presence, address to him these two lines:

*Bonne ou mauvaise santé,*
*Fait notre philosophie,*

And then add, 'this couplet is not by Homer, but by M. Dubois.' The minister will then understand that you are my avowed agent, and you will be permitted to remain in London. You will next deliver to the minister a letter and a packet, which will be left for you at Soho Square, where you are to reside."

Two months after young Leroi's return he was dead. He had been suffering, as his doctor put it, "from a severe derangement of the gastric organs." Fouché never did trust people. . . .

## AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

It's good to be back!

I've always had a very special feeling about this magazine! In time, unless you belong to one school of "editing", you do come to feel that a magazine has a personality. There are many who will disagree with me about this but, if you have any sense of responsibility to your readers and if, over the years, you have tried to get across—without preaching—some of your feelings about this field in which you work, the magazine does seem to become a living thing to you . . .

I ran into an elderly friend—a wraith-like elderly friend, as a matter of fact —some months ago. We'd worked together in the late thirties, years that in retrospect seem so incredibly naive and uncomplicated. I said something about still working in this field and my librarian friend, who remembered me as the author of all sorts of papers on Islamic Art and related matters, shuddered delicately and murmured sympathetically, "How dreadful!"

The trouble is that a lot of people would agree with her . . .

More recently, at the last American Oriental Society conference in Philadelphia, I found two or three people who would look a little dazed at the possibility that the editor of a mystery magazine *could* read, with apparent authoritativeness, a paper on the early social writings of Rabindranath Tagore. There would be an uncomfortable moment of silence, reflecting the degree to which we as a people, at all levels of society, are disturbed by *any* departures from the conformist norm!

This is to be regretted, because neither the founding fathers of this country, nor the men who in the years that followed brought to this country stature and international recognition, can—unless you tamper with history—be said to have been conformists! These were independent thinkers and, with all due respect to some friends in the wastelands, it is independent thinkers (and I am thinking of no labels when I say that) who will lead us towards and beyond todays New Frontiers!

And it is the independent thinkers in this field—men such as Wenzell Brown and, to a degree, Harlan Ellison—who are making very genuine contributions to this field! Wenzell Brown has become well known, in recent years, for his carefully researched studies of the minds of teen-agers and others who find themselves outside of the law, and of the pressures upon them, to which some yield, and which still others fight. There are many who will protest that Harlan Ellison cannot possibly be compared with the quiet deliberate artist that is Wenzell Brown, but this is unfair to someone who in his way can likewise be said to be the extremely gifted but often too facile and often too brash chronicler of these impatient (and at times illiterate) years. . . . I insist that each will be read, however, in the years to come, for the light that they will shed (Wenzell Brown in his novels and in aricles such as the one brought you in this issue, and Harlan in stories such as AT THE MOUNTAINS OF BLINDNESS) on these years of transition which it is so easy to dismiss as "sick", if you ignore historical precedents for other conclusions! (*Continued on Page* 100)

# ocolio nañigo

*by . . . Wenzell Brown*

AT THE EDGE of a cane field about thirty miles from Havana, a man lay dead. His head had been severed from his body and, across the naked black skin of his back, cabalistic symbols had been daubed with white paint. This was in the turbulent days just preceding the seizure of the Cuban Government by Fidel Castro. Amid the stir of events, the murder of the unidentified man was ignored by the press. But the grapevine passed the word on quickly to the teeming city slums, the little villages of Cuba's interior, the distant fincas isolated in the mountains that the power of Nañigo had struck again.

Ocolio Nañigo is swathed in secrecy. Its very existence has, at times, been vehemently denied by politicians of every stripe. Yet this fantastic blood cult is a potent political force on the island and may well become a dominant factor in determining whether an extremist government will pose a threat to the United States through its control of Caribbean waters.

What is Ocolio Nañigo? This is not a simple question to answer, for it is a composite of many things

*Wenzell Brown, who will be remembered by readers of this magazine for his superb WITNESS TO DEATH (July 1958, SMM) is well known for his long interest in the Caribbean and its peoples. In the present article he discusses a problem faced by Batista and by those who came after him—those who today rule in Castro's Cuba.*

—a religion, a political power, an instrument of threat and intimidation, an orgiastic cult of sex, violence and murder. It was spawned in Africa untold centuries ago and, in its purest form, combined the tribal rites, the dances, the fertility ceremonies and the religious practices of many of the Yaruba and Ashanti tribesmen. It shares common roots with Voudun (voodoo), Shango, Obeah and the myriad combinations of religion and superstition which were transplanted from Africa to the islands of the Caribbean and to both American continents via the slave trade.

Nañigo, however, was, at a point in its history, deliberately corrupted by a group of whites who saw in the superstitious awe which enveloped the priests of the cult an opportunity to prolong the bondage of Negro field workers long after the institution of slavery had been abolished by law. Once the secrets of Nañigo had been penetrated and its priests suborned to betray their followers in order to satisfy the greed of the plantation owners, the cult was laid open to victimization from anyone seeking power, whether that power was economic, political or motivated by perverse sexual desires or more complex psychological drives. Having been corrupted, Nañigo attracted the corrupt and debased its own membership so that in its current form only vestiges of its legitimate purposes remain.

Official recognition of Nañigo was first made in Cuba in 1836. Priests of the cult, who had arrived in the island as slaves, petitioned the Governor for his sanction of Nañigo as an accepted religion. This petition was granted under the name of Apapa Epi, a term which was gradually dropped for the more obscure name of Nañigo, which appears to be a bastardization of a Yaruba word, converted into approximate Spanish phonetics.

At first the Cuban slave-owners looked upon the new religious sect with approval. By permitting the transplanted Africans to worship at familiar altars and to indulge in tribal dances and ceremonies, it was felt that the spreading unrest would be mitigated and that, in consequence, the threat of insurrection would be diminished. It was customary for the masters to give a certain amount of free time to the slaves to practice their religion and also for them to grant unusual privileges to the Nañigo priests.

For a few years this pattern seems to have worked out as desired but unrest could not be stemmed so easily. Singly or in groups, the more aggressive of the slaves began to slip away from the plantations. A community of sorts was established in the same mountain fastnesses which in recent years proved an impenetrable cover for Fidel Castro's forces. As knowledge of the community spread, more and more of the slaves escap-

ed to join with their fellow Africans. As food was scarce, prowling groups of marauders singled out the more isolated of the plantations for attack. The embittered ex-slaves not only plundered the estates but frequently killed or tortured their former masters, burned cane fields and buildings and set upon the women. As an aftermath of each raid, the workers of the plantation usually joined the runaways, sometimes by choice, sometimes through coercion.

Nañigo priests were reported to be leaders of the insurrectionists. All night long the soft beat of the tom-toms would throb and echo through the mountains, guiding runaway slaves through the almost impenetrable jungle growth to spots where they would be picked up by the marauders. Not infrequently, Nañigo ceremonies were followed by wholesale flight of the slaves to join their fellows.

An immediate crackdown on Nañigo was ordered. The temples and rites were outlawed. Men suspected of practicing Nañigo were mercilessly flogged and sometimes beaten to death. Extraordinary tortures reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition became common practice—slaves were mutilated, their tongues ripped out, their feet chopped off, or they were publicly suspended by a single ankle throughout the day.

Flogging and torture proved only a further incentive for escape and some of the plantation owners were sufficiently intelligent to realize this. The authority of the Nañigo priests superceded their own. The priests claimed supernatural powers among which was the skill to kill at a distance. Their followers were convinced that their lives rested in the hands of the priests and that any betrayal of the secrets of Nañigo would be punished by painful death. The objective of the plantation owners became to win the priests to their side but this was no easy task. The Nañigo leaders were not susceptible to bribes or threats, perhaps recognizing that only through continued defiance could they maintain their positions of power.

Official attempts by the Cuban Government to crush Nañigo only served to force the movement underground and thus strengthen it. The religious ceremonies and practices continued but careful safeguards were put up to prevent non-members of the cult from approaching the altars, all routes to which were guarded by sentries.

No white man or man with white blood had ever been permitted entrance into the cult during the centuries of Nañigo's existence and, because of this, a wedge was formed between the full-blooded Africans and the mulattoes. The whites sought to take advantage of this discord to enlist the aid of the mulattoes in destroying Nañigo. Spies were sent into the mountains

to discover the secret passwords, the nature of the Nañigo ceremonies and the identity of the leaders and to bring this knowledge back to the plantation owners.

Within a short time, the mulattoes had penetrated the order and soon a fringe group, backed by the whites, was jockeying for power, declaring themselves to be the true priests of Nañigo. Bitter internecine strife ensued during which many among both the old leaders and the insurgent group were slain, each side vying with the other to give a more awe-inspiring and macabre twist to the ritualistic murders.

With the close of the American Civil War a new element was added to the strange olio which had developed. Large numbers of Southern planters left the United States to take up residence in Cuba. Among these were many who had been active in the Ku Klux Klan. These men were quick to recognize the potentialities offered by the control of Nañigo. They threw themselves enthusiastically into the plots and counterplots surrounding the cult. The white-hooded riders of the Klan spread violence and terror through the Cuban mountainsides. By ruthlessness, the use of superstitious fear, murder and bribery, they soon eliminated all opposition and established themselves, through puppets, as the directors of Nañigo's destiny.

Under the aegis of the whites, the original aims and objectives of Nañigo were reversed. Instead of continuing as an instrument of revolt against slavery, the cult, now rechristened Ocolio Nañigos, had as its primary purpose the complete subjugation of the Negroes to the will of their masters. The new leaders cared nothing for the age-old tribal gods and ceremonies except as a means of inspiring obedience through terror.

A thin patina of Christian symbolism was spread over the African religious fetishes. The Cross of the Ku Klux Klan burned during the ceremonial dances and ikons of the Virgin Mary were arranged in strange juxtaposition to carved wooden statuettes of the Ashanti goddess of fertility. The green native rum of Cuba was carried to the Palays in hogsheads and the casks opened for all to drink. Elements of the Black Mass were also added by the more enthusiastic and imaginative of the new cult leaders.

Not until 1886, was slavery officially abolished in Cuba. By that time Ocolio Nañigos had become so firmly entrenched in the mountain areas that it held the field workers in a bondage more effective than legal slavery. The orgiastic nature of the Nañigo revelries prevented any real resistance from the participants. Men and women who were coerced into back-breaking work in the cane fields six days a week were not likely to

spurn a night of dancing, music, drunkenness and sexual license, even though the night might reach its climax in murder, complete with ritualistic trimmings.

In many of the plantations, every field hand and household servant was compelled to join the order. As a part of the initiation ceremony, the novitiate was forced to drink warm blood drawn from a freshly killed white chicken or kid and to swear an oath of loyalty to Nañigo and obedience to its priests, the violation of which was punishable by decapitation.

Youths, upon reaching the age of puberty, were introduced into the cult. The ancient fertility rituals with their attendant dances, were debased to the point where each youth had to "prove his manhood" to the accompaniment of the cheers, chants and hand-clapping of the assembly. The youth then placed his life in the hands of the priest by presenting him with a small sweat-stained sack including hairs, clippings from finger and toe nails, wads of cotton soaked in his own blood and other bodily excretions. This was not intended as a symbolic act of obeisance, for the novitiate was led to believe that the burning of this sack would result in his death and that, quite literally, from this time on his life depended upon the whim of the priest.

At the close of the ceremony, the novitiate was marked with the trifold symbols of Nañigo. Fresh blood, sometimes his own, was used to paint a cross on his forehead. Across his chest the cabalistic symbol $\frac{x|o}{o|x}$ was smeared and on his back, the reverse symbol $\frac{o|o}{o|o}$.

Belief in the supernatural powers of the priests was carefully fostered. The most significant of these alleged powers was the ability to kill from a distance. The cardinal crime of any member of Nañigo was to attempt escape. Whenever a worker ran away, every attempt was made to track him down. If found, he was slain and beheaded and his body was usually placed beside running water in such a fashion that it would appear that he had been decapitated in some magical way while attempting to assuage his thirst. Should the runaway make good his escape, rumors of his death were circulated.

To the priests also was attributed the power of mind-reading. As a climax to the Nañigo revelries, the high priest of the order would appear, suitably bedecked in elaborate clothing, his anonymity preserved by an African mask. He would mount a "Throne" and, as his rum-sodden followers knelt before him, his eyes would pass from one to another, seeking out any who harbored "impure thoughts," presumably those of running away or of acting in defiance of the masters. If the gaze of the priest rested too long on any one individual, the executioners of

the cult would rush forward, seize the unfortunate man or woman and drag him or her before the altar. Here he or she would be forced to kneel and await punishment. Minor offenders might escape with a flogging but those less fortunate would be beheaded with the blow of a machete.

In the course of time, many of the old plantations were destroyed or closed down. Others fell into the hands of more humane masters. The rampant days of Ocolio Nañigo were over and the power of the brotherhood waned, but it has never disappeared altogether. High in the mountains, the Nañigo drums still beat out their dread message and visitors in the isolated fincas are still warned against interference with, or too much curiosity about Nañigo.

Gradually the cane field workers and their families drifted out of the mountainous areas and settled in the spreading slums of Havana and other Cuban cities. With them they brought their belief in Nañigo. Priests of the cult followed and set up "temples" among the shacks and lean-tos, the teeming streets and crowded markets. Charlatans, crackpots, hangers-on and confidence men of all degrees were quick to exploit the superstitious beliefs of the illiterate and ignorant. Declaring themselves to be Nañigo priests and gifted with occult powers, they did a brisk business in selling cure-alls, love philters, curses and charms of various sorts. Greed was the motivating factor but, behind their charlatanry, many of these self-professed priests and priestesses possessed a sound primitive psychology and an extensive knowledge of the use of drugs and herbs. In consequence certain cures were effective and certain curses deadly. Among people who could not afford legitimate medical care and to whom the psychiatrist's couch was an unheard of thing, these practitioners of black magic assumed a high degree of influence.

A few of the least scrupulous of these practitioners did not hesitate to deal in death at a price. In most instances, the victims were obscure slum dwellers and their murders went unremarked in the newspapers and unpunished by the courts although, in the 1920's, three "Nañigo murders" did attract wide attention locally. Evidence, however, was not forthcoming against the suspected assassins. Witnesses who might have been persuaded to testify in an ordinary murder case, suddenly became forgetful, close-mouthed and sullen when the trappings of Nañigo were present.

Cuba has always been beset by bitter political feuds and, from time to time, has been under the domination of ruthless dictators. No matter who has held power, conspiracies, cabals and murders instigated by politics and revenge have been a part of the national

scene. In the 1930's during the incredibly violent rule of Machado, murder reached an all-time high. Shrewd professional assassins recognized the advantage of smearing the bodies of their victims with cabalistic signs. Not only did these markings serve as red herrings, but they also added superstitious dread beyond the natural fear of death. Of the "Nañigo murders" during these years, it is impossible to assess the number in which Nañigo, as such, played a genuine part. Similarly, there is no gauge for estimating how many of these murders were the work of Machado's henchmen, how many were committed by the opposition and how many were unrelated to politics. Cuba operated under a cloud of censorship which was nearly impenetrable and information can only be collected by word-of-mouth accounts.

Rumors of Nañigo deaths, however, have been persistent throughout more recent years. Claims have been made, and staunchly denied, that Nañigo was employed by Cuban industrialists in an attempt to discourage the growth of unions. Similar accusations and disclaimers have been circulated concerning the activities around Batista's attempt to maintain his dictatorial powers.

The emergence of Fidel Castro as a national figure once more brought Nañigo to the forefront. The presence of Castro's bearded army in the mountainous areas where no white man had ever set foot gave rise to fantastic stories, fables and re-awakened legends. By and large, the workers were pro-Castro, while the landowners opposed him. The field hands deserted the estates in large numbers to join the fledgling army. As a counter-measure the owners of the estates reactivated the old superstitious beliefs regarding Nañigo and, as a weapon to keep the field hands at work, threatened the deserters with death by decapitation if they should desert. Castro's partisans allegedly used similar methods in persuading local workers to swell their ranks.

These methods of intimidation, once having been used successfully in the rural areas, naturally spread to the city slums. All of the factions in Cuba's elaborate struggle for power are aware of the advantages of persuading the island's underprivileged groupings that the supernatural powers of Nañigo operate for the benefit of their particular party. Mention of Nañigo rarely emerges openly but no extensive plot or counterplot exists without the mystic rites of Nañigo appearing around its fringes. Thus in a world of jet planes, hydrogen bombs and interplanetary missiles fear and obedience can still be induced by a black candle burning in a window, a cabalistic sign scrawled on a door, or a curse in the form of a lime pierced with black pins.

Successful control of the political situation cannot be maintained in Cuba without the support, or at least the acquiesence of the workers, most of whom remain illiterate and superstitious. Nañigo and its many off-shoots is still a force capable of goading some of these people to action and to intimidate and silence many more. Whoever employs Nañigo most successfully possesses a powerful weapon. And United States cannot afford to ignore this situation. In case of global conflict, a friendly Cuba is an invaluable ally while a hostile nation in the Caribbean would be capable of thrusting upward into what military strategists have termed "the soft underbelly of our nation" with disastrous effects.

A final word of warning: Whenever mention of Ocolio Nañigo appears in public print, roars of outraged anger ensue from certain Cubans who either deny Nañigo's existence altogether, claim that it is a thing of the past, or insist that its following is extremely limited. An article on Ocolio Nañigos naturally tends to place a heavy stress upon its significance. You will find no signs of Nañigo in the swank hotels in and about Havana but move away from the well-worn tourist tracks, into the slums and rural areas, and you will not need too sharp an eye to pick out Nañigo's symbols. For that matter they can be found wherever Cuban communities have been established in the United States. Observe but don't pry too deeply. Open curiosity can place you in jeopardy and, as far as Nañigo goes, the old saying that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing is quite literally true.

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*NEXT MONTH—*

DEATH AT WINCHONA by LAWRENCE G. BLOCHMAN
THE HARD MAN by RICHARD DEMING
THE ART OF MURDER by NORMAN DANIELS
THE ADOPTED DAUGHTER by MELVILLE DAVISSON POST
THE HOOD IS A BONNET by WILLIAM O'FARRELL

*and*

**THE BIGGER GAME**

**A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS**

*—in THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE*

# prince's mixture

*by . . . Avram Davidson*

Mr. Wood heard the hurried footsteps, shortly before closing time.

"Those are frightened feet, Maude," he said to his daughter. Afterwards she remembered, and mentioned this to someone, and men came and asked her father questions. But at the time she merely said, "Oh?" Her father said nothing more, but his fingers played upon his cane. Most feet that passed by meant little or nothing to Maude, and most feet that entered the little shop meant only sixpennyworth of sweets—a box of chocolates—a quarter-pound of candied ginger; which, in terms of the mathematics by which they lived, meant: so many eggs, so much tea, sugar, bacon, so much for the rent. Feet, frightened or otherwise, meant little to Maude—if they went on by.

"Let's have some music, Maude," her father had said, earlier that week. "Shall we play the Goldberg Variations once more before I return the records to Mr. Swanne?"

Maude said, "Very well, Father." In another moment the pure notes of the harpsichord swelled up and filled the little shop with their

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*Avram Davidson had contributed extensively to* COMMENTARY *and other opinion magazines before beginning to write fiction some years ago. He took first prize, with his first mystery, in the annual EQMM Contest, and has since then appeared elsewhere, including SMM.*

tinkling sound. She had made as if to speak to her father, but then the music began, and she desisted.

Mr. Wode, listening, recalled what his friend Simon Swanne said, as he and Simon listened to the records in Swanne's shop. "Hearken to it, Joseph: Like drops of golden crystal. This is beautiful music, but it is music that has never known passion." Thinking of these words now, old Wode repeated the last phrase aloud.

"Neither had I," said Maude; but she spoke low, almost to herself, and the old man did not mark her words.

"'Golden crystal'? A lovely fancy, Simon," Mr. Wode said. He mused. "I remember gold. And I remember crystal. But do I remember—? Is there such a thing? No matter. A lovely fancy."

It had been Wednesday afternoon. Joseph Wode always spent that time with Simon Swanne. Not that he was not often in that shop, not much larger than Maude's, at other times; but they lived so near together and old Wode had so little to do—it would have been easy to yield to temptation, to stay longer than the few minutes he allowed. But he was stern with himself. His friend Swanne must not be allowed to grow tired of him. No. "Good morning, Simon." "Good morning, Joseph. Storms off the Orkneys, 'Gale Warnings' says." "Aye. Nothing your Jo Grimond can do about *that,* I fear." A chuckle from Simon. "Nay, Joseph, you'll live to see a Liberal at Number Ten again, I tell you." "Only if he comes to sweep the chimneys . . . Ah, well. Fill my box, if you please, Simon. Prince's Mixture, this time, I think." "Prince's Mixture! A good choice for this time of year." And the heavy crock moved down from the shelf behind him and set carefully upon the counter . . . "There you are, Joseph. Thank you. You'll not forget Wednesday? You'll be here at two?" "The Lord willing, Simon. Thank you. And good morning." So it went.

Wednesday. There was always music. Presently there would be tea. Simon would read something —oh, at home Maude would read, too. The Scriptures. Pilgrims Progress. But Simon had lighter tastes, worldlier ones. *THE NEWS OF THE WORLD,* now, what could be worldlier? And what more unfit for a girl like Maude to read to her father (or, for that matter, to herself)?

Now and then Simon would say, "I have been thinking of selling the shop." And something like terror would swoop to seize old Wode by the throat. "Oh, it's different for you, Joseph. You've got someone to leave your business to. But I've no one. I've been thinking of Queensland, you know. I always wanted to go when I was a lad. It's warm there. All the year round, and flocks of colored cockatoos and parrots, and black men, and gold.

Everything clean and green there, Joseph. Not like here—the cold rain and the dirty fog and the grimy brick."

Old Wode echoed his friend's sigh, but for a different reason. To be left alone, at this stage of his life—no, he couldn't face it, couldn't even face the thought. Oh, yes, he had Maude; he had the shop, but though Simon was kind enough to pretend it was his, Joseph Wode's, business, in all but the strictly legal sense it was Maude's. He himself cared little about it, hadn't for years. And Maude was kind to him, took care of all his needs, never made a fuss. But there was no warmth to her. Life had passed her by, it seemed, and she would never catch up with it now.

They were frying at Emling's as Mr. Wode went by, the album of records under his arm; he didn't need the small sign, *Now Frying,* to tell him that. Nor the big one, for that matter *(Jno. Emling, Fish Caterers)* to inform him or any other passer-by what was going on behind the steamed windows. As Ted Barker the milkman said, often enough, no one in Portuguese Passage or Portuguese Court needed go hungry: they had only to open their doors and dine off the smell from Emlings . . . And, like as not, after saying this, Ted would stop by for a shilling's worth of chips himself. It *was* convenient to be so near, a bit of plaice or haddock, a nice dish of smelts or a bowl of jellied eels, at your elbow if you'd a mind to it.

It did make the Passage and the Court (both, according to Simon Swanne, who wrote local history columns for the district paper; both named after the residence of some pre-Cromwellian refugee from the Inquisition and the *Auto-da-fé*), it did make them smell rather strongly when the air hung low and motionless, though. But in Simon's place the fishy odors had no chance.

He greeted his old friend. "Your chair's ready for you, as always. Ah, the records . . . thank you. There was no hurry. There never is." Old Wode sank back in "his" chair.

"By and by," said Swanne, "we might listen to some new records. Pipe music—*ceol mor,* mostly, but there's some *ceol aotrom,* too. Lovely grace notes."

"Good," said Wode. "Good. I'll await the music with pleasure." He fumbled in his pocket. "You might fill my box with Sweet Scotch, too, for the occasion."

Simon took the box, a small one of dark wood inlaid with ivory. He went to the shelves behind him, took down a heavy crock, set it on the counter. "Have you heard the news, Joseph?" he asked, picking up the brass scoop, lifting the lid. "Ted Barker's getting married, he tells me. Didn't say to whom. His second time around. 'Triumph of hope over experience,' as Dr.

Johnson puts it—eh? Young Emling's wife has gone off to the Maternity to have her baby. That'll be number three . . ."

From his chair Old Wode could get the earthy scent of the Scotch as it rose from the crock, momentarily triumphant over all the others in the shop. He could picture the powdery, mustard-colored stuff as it slid off the scoop. He anticipated the first pinch, the grateful bite of it, the savor. It promised to be a good afternoon. But, then, they were all of them so.

"Here you are, Joseph. No, thanks, I won't join you,"—as Wode offered the box; "I'm on High Dry Toast. The crock is getting along towards empty and I'd not like what's left to get stale. It doesn't move as fast as it used to, you know, the High Dry Toast. And it was always a favorite of mine. The old Duchess of Kent, you know, Queen Victoria's mother—*she* favored it, too.

"It's a delicate snuff," he said fondly, clicking open his own box and taking a pinch, waving thumb and forefinger to dislodge loose grains; *"Hah-hah. Hm.* Nothing coarse about it. There is even—or so I fancy—an Eighteenth Century note to its color: that ivory tint. Quite Georgian. Yes—but," he said, sadly, "it doesn't sell as well as it should. Do you know what does the best? Mentholated! Upon my word! I don't stock it in bulk, of course, and in my opinion it belongs properly in a chemist's shop, but—Piggot's Mentholated Snuff!" He sneezed, scornfully.

The bell tinkled. A young boy came in to buy a packet of five Woodbines, said *Ta,* was gone. That was it, really—cigarettes: that was what kept Simon Swanne in business. He paid no attention to the sale, however, went on to talk of his clientele—for snuff, of course—and of the many snuffs themselves. "Two young men from the ballet were in this morning," he observed. "Otto de Rose was what they wanted, had been everywhere, even Fribourg and Treyer in the Haymarket hadn't got it. But *I* had it, indeed yes. They were delighted, invited me to come see them dance. I may go . . . During the War, of course, there was no such thing as Otto de Rose. Essence comes from Turkey; simply couldn't be had. I wouldn't use synthetic. It may be that Some might, but not I."

"Certainly not, Simon."

There *was* such a thing, as fermenting, as blending. A proper snuffman didn't just toss a snuff as he might a salad; not try to cover up poor stock with a heavy scent.

"Plain Dutch, for example, Joseph—now there is a preparation which cannot be disguised, the simplicity of the recipe forbids it. Not that the world cares, alas, Joseph. We do not live in the gracious period which preceded the ascent of the segar—to say nothing of the almost

absolute triumph of the cigarette. The world knows nothing of such successes of the snuffman's art as Seringapatam, Red Wintergreen, Peppermint, Massulipatam, or Gambetta . . ."

Gambetta, it is true, was somewhat on the coarse side. In that respect it was like Rappee, rather. But good, hearty blends, both of them; no gentleman need be ashamed to use either—nor, for that matter, Prince's Mixture. The name itself was evidence of its high patronage in a former age, the First Gentleman of Europe (and fie upon those who decry him on the grounds of his personal life: it was none of their affair, and besides—but no, Mr. Swanne preferred to say nothing of *that*. Let poor Queen Caroline rest in her tomb, unmaligned by Simon Swanne), before he became Regent, to say nothing of King, had favored this blend by his patronage. Hence the name.

"If I have such a thing as a favorite," Old Wode said, "I suppose it is Prime Macouba."

"An excellent choice. I have had Americans come to my shop for my Prime Macouba—although, for reasons which I do not know, they pronounce it 'Macaboy'."

And so the afternoon passed. There were cream cakes for tea. The *pibrochs* were models of their kind, and the grace notes were indeed, as Swanne had observed, lovely.

Nothing had been said about going to Queensland. Perhaps, thought Old Wode, Simon had given up the idea.

Not that it mattered.

For the next day Simon Swanne was dead.

"Father," said Maude. There were strange men behind her.

Old Wode lifted his head from his hands. Misery lay heavy upon him. "Yes?" he asked. "Yes, Maude?"

"We're sorry to disturb you, sir," one of the strange men said. "We understand how you must feel—but it may be of help to us if you could recall what you said to your daughter."

Recall? Recall what?

Patiently, Maude said, "I had just asked you, Father, but you didn't seem to hear me. Yesterday. What you said about those footsteps. After—after this terrible thing happened, I remarked to Mr. Emling what you'd said, and he told these gentlemen. They are from the police. Would you tell them, please, what you said about those steps you heard?"

Her father couldn't think of what she meant. With patience equal to Maude's, the man from the police said, "Miss Wode tells us that yesterday, about half an hour before closing time, which would make it at half past eight or so, you made a remark to her about feet going by here. Do you remember?"

"I don't understand." Simon would never go to Queensland now. Nothing to him now or forever, the southern sun, the parrots and the cockatoos, the black men and the gold. What was all this talk of footsteps? What—

The police gentleman, who said his name was Weelright, tried to explain. "It seems that Mr. Swanne was killed at about that time, sir . . ." And he repeated the story in his slow, even voice. It might appear in *The News Of The World,* but Simon Swanne would read it aloud no more.

Mr. Emling, senior, had noticed with surprise as he went out to put up his shutters, that Mr. Swanne's shop was still open, though the tobacconist usually closed earlier than the fish caterer. After he finished his task he walked across the flag-paved Passage to have a look. Simon Swanne was lying on the floor behind his counter. Someone had struck him on the head with one of the heavy stoneware crocks from the shelf with such force as to shatter the big jar, and to fracture the skull. Mr. Swanne was dead, the quarterly rent money gone from his cash drawer.

"It must have happened, according to our medical report, about the time you heard those steps you remarked about to Miss Wode," said Weelright. "'Frightened feet,' she says you commented. Can you explain to us what you meant by that?"

Old Wode thought a moment, remembering the steps now. "I have been blind," he said, "for over forty years . . ."

"Yes," said Weelright, quietly. "I know."

"Then you know, too, that a lot of nonsense is talked about blind men's ears. My ears are no better than yours. But I listen to what I hear more closely than you do, I suppose. I have to. It comes automatically to me now. The feet . . . Yes, I'll tell you what I meant. The man wanted to run. Every few steps he'd quicken his gait as if he was about to run. But he'd think better of it. He'd slow down again. But the fear was there. I could hear it. I could hear the fright in his feet."

He explained that it was late, fewer people were about. The Passage had no automobile traffic going through it, the Borough Council had put up the posts at either end to keep motorcars out. Portuguese Passage was narrow, and the sound of the man's feet had echoed as they went past.

"Then it *was a man's* feet?"

"Oh, yes."

The other stranger, a younger man than Weelright, asked, "Did you recognize the steps, Mr. Wode? Did they sound familiar to you?"

Old Wode thought a minute. "I had the feeling I did know," he said. "At the side of my mind was the thought I recognized them. Had they been going past quiet

and regularly, I don't doubt I could tell you whose they were. But not now. I can't say. I just can't say."

They thanked him, asked him to try and remember, to keep his mind on it. Perhaps he might recall. Perhaps he might recognize the steps, might hear them again. And Joseph Wode said he would concentrate. He almost never went out to the Passage or the Court—if the steps were familiar ones. . . . He did not finish.

Hard upon the departure of the police came old Emling, and Tom Taylor from the Bull, and Ted Barker, the milkman—the latter to leave the daily two bottles from his little cart, the former two out of simple curiosity. "Terrible thing, this, Jos." "A man's not safe in his own house, it seems, Mr. Wode." And then, almost together—hesitant, yet bold—"what did the police want to know?"

But he didn't tell them. Let them read the story in *The News Of The World*. What did it mean to them —compared to what it meant to *him?* The voice of Simon Swanne came to his ears: "Have you heard the news, Joseph?" and the scrape as he got down the crock from the shelf and opened it. "He was speaking to me, only yesterday—poor Simon, that is," Old Wode told them. "Speaking of your daughter-in-law, Emling, and of you going to be married, Ted," he told them. They were properly impressed with the wonder of it: marriage, birth, death. Only yesterday—He could hear the dead man's voice, smell the richly aromatic snuff. Prince's Mixture: The name itself was evidence of its high patronage, he'd said. Only—

"Well, we won't be intruding any further on you, Jos," said Emling. The other two mumbled assent, the three of them left Maude whispering to one—

"Maude—"

"Let me make you a hot cup of tea, Father," she said. Tea. His best friend—his only friend—was gone forever, and she spoke of cups of tea.

"Maude!" "Yes, Father?" "Is there anyone from the police still up at—at Simon's place?" She walked up to the door, opened it, peered out. "I don't see any one. Father, there is something I—"

He hushed her thought for a moment. "Maude," he said, at last. "Walk up and look in through the window. On the shelves behind the counter—see if there's a gap on the shelves. There must be. Count off and figure which one of the crocks is missing. Do you hear me—Maude?"

"Yes, Father." Quiet as always. Put up with old man's vapors: He owns the shop, doesn't he? No fear, it will be yours soon enough. Wednesday will be like any day now. What was the use of going on? Ah, back soon enough—

"There *is* a gap, Father, just as you said. It's the end jar on the top

shelf on the right that's missing."

So. "All right, Maude. Don't stop here, walk out and bring back a policeman. If there's none in sight, ring 999. But do it now, Maude."

"Yes, Father."

Alone in the shop old Joseph Wode sat hunched in his chair. Slowly he straightened up. He rose, stood listening. Footsteps sounded on the flags in the passage. Frightened feet—the sound grew louder. Unseeing eyes opening wide, hands clutching at the void before him, mouth crying wordless grief and fury, Old Wode flung open the door, rushed into the street and threw himself upon the man going by.

"You hit him with no small force, sir," said Weelright. "He cracked that knee of his when he went down—"

"Live to have his neck cracked, I trust?" the old man inquired, grimly.

"Oh, he'll be able to stand in the dock at his trial," the police officer said, correctly; "Mr. Ted Barker will. Said he wanted the money for his marriage, if you please! My word, You must have felt supremely confident for you to have gone for him like that. It *was* the footsteps, wasn't it—that you recognized, I mean?"

The old man sighed. "Partly it was that. It must've been the sight of the policeman coming up the passage with my daughter that frightened him. He wanted to run —that is, his feet did. But he daren't, not with the law in sight. And so I knew the step—but it wasn't only that."

"No, I gather not. Why did you ask your daughter to—"

Poor Simon. "Have you heard the news, Joseph?" he'd said as he took down the heavy stoneware crock. Old Wode remembered that, when Emling and Barker had come in the next day, remembered it because Simon had spoken of them. And he'd even been sure he could recall the scent of the snuff at that moment: Prince's Mixture. Only it shouldn't have been Prince's Mixture, it should have been Sweet Scotch, because he, Joseph Wode, had asked for it especially. To go with the music of the pipes, the wailing of the drones, the skirling of the chanter, the warbling grace notes.

"So there was no reason, Mr. Weelright, for me to fancy I smelled Prince's Mixture snuff just then. But I knew I *did,* so I knew it wasn't fancy. That's why I asked Maude to go and look in the shop and count out where the gap was. After forty years I knew by sound where every single crock was, for Simon never changed. And if Prince's Mixture was the missing one, it was the one the murderer had broke. And the man on whose clothes I smelt it so strongly, the man here in my shop, that was the man who had killed my friend."

And by and by they left and then in came the neighbors and then the newspapermen, though little enough would they be able to say at present, the matter being *sub judice* and British libel laws being what they were: *Following certain inquiries the police arrested Edward Albert Barker, aged 32, of 17 Artillery Way.* . . . And by and by they all went away and Maude, shut up the shop.

There would be Simon's funeral. And then the long days, long weeks and years. It wasn't wicked, was it, to pray to Heaven, "Not many years, please"? Thinking aloud, Old Wode said, "But it just comes to me that I'm sorry for that scoundrel's young woman, the one he was to marry."

A harsh voice said, "Don't be sorry for me—envy me!"

"Maude!"

"A man killed for me! A man risked his life and his immortal soul for me! Why shouldn't I be envied? Why not, Father? Why not?"

And then—her voice losing but little of its sudden harshness—she said, "I'd wanted to tell you. I'd been trying for weeks. I made Ted promise no one else would know before you. But how could I say it: 'Father, I'm leaving you and you'll be all alone now'?" She was silent for the space of a breath or two, then she cried out, "It was wicked of him to want to steal, but I know he could never have meant to kill—No one else ever asked me. No one else—ever—" she sobbed.

Numbed astonishment was replaced by shock, as Joseph Wode fully realized it all. He himself had lost his friend, the manslayer might lose his life—but what of Maude's loss? She, the most innocent of all? And he, her father, had brought it all about . . .

Shock fell away before understanding and pity, and these were blotted out by a sudden and overwhelming sense of self reproach. He'd been sorry only for himself all these long years of blindness and widowerhood, thinking only of his own sorrow, and never of hers. What *his* pains were, were not of his choosing: Providence had laid them on him. Only now did he realize, his heart swelling, how large, how terribly large a share of them his daughter had laid upon herself all the years, that his own be made lighter.

He groped for her in the darkness that grew increasingly brighter with new-found love, and she came into his arms, weeping.

"Let's think no more of dying, Daughter," he said; "nor of envy. Let's think only of living, and of how we may be a blessing to each other."

# at the mountains of blindness

*by . . . Harlan Ellison*

WHILE WAITING, there were nine things Porky was able to watch, in the alley. The first was a bloated rat, the upper half of its cadaverous-grey body thrust through a gnawed hole in a rusty garbage can, gorging itself on refuse. The second was a clarinetist in the building across the alley, running changes, practicing scales. The third was the traffic that ran past the mouth of the alley; the fourth was the winking neon sign DENNY'S JAZZ CLUB in red and gold that had no reason for existence, back here near the stage door of Denny's.

The remaining five were the nails of his right hand, methodically chewed to the quick. These he studied best of all.

Porky was a pusher. He was waiting for his mark to come and make the connection. Porky was also a philosopher of sorts. A phlegmatic philosopher whose ethical view of the Universe, simply stated, was: "Them as strikes first don't get struck."

It was a sultry night, mid-August, a good night to make the connection and then go back to the apartment for beer and Beethoven. The steel fire door of Denny's shud-

*As we went to press, Harlan Ellison, currently editor of Regency Books in Evanston, Ill., was trying to either complete writing or finalize six books. In addition to editing and doing assorted columns and other chores, he was in all likelihood writing more hard-hitting fiction, such as this, reflecting the frustration and the despair and the anger of our times.*

dered open and a thick slash of light erupted from the doorway, ran up the brick wall opposite.

A snatch of crowd noise and rattling glasses followed, then was sliced off as the door closed.

"Porky?"

The pusher shoved away from the wall and turned toward the raised platform with its metal guard rail. The thin, dark-suited man stood against Denny's door, back pressed tightly to the metal, staring down into the shadows of the alley. His voice was soft and tremulous. Porky—had he been more the suckblood pushers are characterized to be—might have smiled, knowing that tone in the other's voice. It was the sound of need, the hunger of want, the stomach-drying, lip-wrenching desire for junk . . . the last stages of withdrawal before the junkie would start crying, thrashing, cursing, dying a little, then a great deal.

Had Porky not been a phlegmatic philosopher, and a good businessman, had he been a succubus as the vice squad typified him, he would have gloated. It meant the market was prepared to stand as much as he could lay on. He would have no trouble wringing the last cent tonight.

"Hey, uh, you out there, Porky?"

Porky stepped into the feeble light cast by the street lamp at the mouth of the alley. "I'm here, Tomás."

The Latin cast of the young man's face eased with the passing of apprehension. Porky was here. A fix. It was all right. The sweat—bottled inside—burst forth. "Hey, mon, like I thought you wasn't gonna make it."

Softly, Porky made his point. "I'm here, Tomás."

The man came down the three steps to the moist stones of the alley. He two-fingered a cigarette from his shirt pocket and stuck it in his mouth, hand shaking. Porky watched. Phlegmatically.

"Nice night, leetle hot, maybe, but a nice night," Tomás said, staring up into the sky. The sky was filled with nothing. It was that sort of night.

"You got the money, Tomás? I've got an appointment." There was quiet, measured impatience in Porky's voice. The business at hand, then away.

"Yeah, mon, nice night," Tomás said. He was sweating like a pig, too much, now.

Porky didn't speak. He turned to go. It was a bust connection. The mark couldn't raise the bread; no dough, no H.

"Hey," Tomás laughed lightly, "take it easy, mon. I got the goods. I was just taken it light, you know." The pusher paused. "I've got an appointment, Tomás, let's get this over with," he said. Gentle. Nothing but soft. A businessman doesn't argue with his customers. He merely sets up the supply, to match the demand.

The other reached into his inner jacket and brought out a wallet. He began counting bills. Then he handed the sheaf to Porky. The look of expectancy was on his face; Porky didn't bother counting.

"You're short, Tomás."

The musician wiped a hand across his mouth, his cigarette down-to-filter between two fingers, yellowed from cigarettes long-gone.

"I'm not bad, Porky. Listen, we got a gig uptown at some deb brawl tomorrow night, mon, I get you the rest. I'm only down a few bills. Stake me, Porky. I breeng you the rest . . ."

Porky had laid the money gently on the concrete platform, and was walking away. Tomás lunged for him, grabbed his arm. "Hey, listen, mon, you don't do thees to me—"

Porky neither struggled nor fought back. He merely said (gently), "Tomás, you lay a hand on me, you'll never get fixed again." No blow to the stomach could have worked more effectively. The other backed off.

"I-I got to have the stuff, Porky. You g-got to take care of me, mon. I'm dead cat if you don't." His Spanish accent—submerged since his arrival—became stronger with his frenzy.

Porky spread his hands, "Sorry, Tomás. You know how I carry on my business. If you can't pay, I can't take care of you."

Tomás slumped down on the steps. A moan and soft sob. "I tried ever'ting. I bugged my seester lives up on 82nd Street, I hocked my fiddle case, mon I deed ever'ting. I can't get it up till tomorra'."

Porky shrugged. "I'll come back tomorrow then."

Tomás clutched at the air in front of Porky. "No, mon, I can't stand eet. I can't stand the pain, they comin' close together now, they gone toss me off this gig if I don't steady. Some of the other guys they hooked but they make others gigs, mon, they can get the bread—"

Porky knew. He dealt with half a dozen musicians on this street. Two of them from this group. He knew they had Sutton Place broads keeping them in junk, or money from home, or ex-wives' wealthy parents, or . . .

He didn't think about where some of them got it.

"Sorry, Tomás," Porky said. Again, this time with no pretense to draw out the market dealings, he strode off. The shriek came from nowhere, from Tomás, from everywhere, and ricocheted off the brick walls of the alley; the clarinet player slammed the window. Tomás leaped off the stairs, his jacket flying behind him.

His hands locked around Porky's throat, dragged him backward. Porky gagged, flailed the air, kicked back and missed Tomás' shin. The steel door to Denny's slammed open. A heavy voice yelled, "*Tomás*! Get off him!"

The sound of a body hurtling

the guard rail, the slap of soles hitting the alley. Three running steps, and rough hands grabbed the other by the ears, as Porky slumped to his knees.

Tomás thrashed as he was dragged by the ears, and the attacker hurled him against the wall. He lost, lost, fogged and lost with no way to go—came off the wall, rebounded—and caught the fist in the mouth. The attacker knew where to hit him: not a horn man, hit him in the mouth. Tomás slapped the walking bass, get him anywhere but the hands, the back.

Tomás settled in a heap.

The attacker lifted Porky and stood him against the wall, still holding his throat. "Didn't he have the scratch, Porky?"

Porky looked up and saw another of his customers.

Norman Eney, leader of the group in which Tomás played bass, stared at the little pusher. His eyes were giveaways: he was just coming down off a high. Yet he had overcome his depression, his withdrawal (light now, but soon to get worse), to aid . . . who? Porky? Or Tomás?

"That's my business, Eney. Do you want to buy?" Norman Eney shook his head slowly. He stood away from Porky, not moving, watching him out of cool, grey eyes that said nothing. He was a tall crewcut man, the natural conception of a trombone player.

Finally, he murmured, "He's not one of the good ones, Porky. You shouldn't deal with him; he can't defend himself the way we can."

They stared across a knowing abyss at one another. Buyer and seller, both knowing how the system worked. Both knowing Porky was a dealer, but not a decider.

"Everybody's got the right to go to hell in his own way, Eney," the pusher said. "Nobody ruins anybody else. They only open doors. No one forces them through; that's each man's decision, whether to walk through the door or not."

"You open doors for too many people, Porky."

The pusher shrugged. He was a businessman.The ethic of the thing didn't enter. He turned and left the alley. Tomás stirred feebly as Norman Eney lifted him under the shoulders, carried him back into Denny's.

The rat continued feeding. There was hunger, and a way to assuage that hunger. Traffic moved. So did the night.

They came for Porky in his apartment.

The pusher's apartment was uptown, and insulated from the world in which he conducted his business affairs by sight and sound and frame of mind. With the door closed New York was a mythical kingdom, far away. A Babylon not to be confused with realities, as this apartment was a reality. With the door closed, and the draperies

pulled, with the air conditioning making an atmosphere all his own, and the stereo handling its Scarlatti, its Bach, its Orff—he was where he wanted to be. In a world not of that other world, in a world he made for himself, with no taints or remembrances from beyond. The sanctity of Porky's world was a matter of custom-fitted bookshelves, well-stocked larders and full turntables.

The sanctity was shattered by the ringing of the door bell. Four-thirty A.M. The jazz joints were closed, the cops in the subways slipped their pennies into the candy machines and received their coated peanuts for the long beat up and down the platform, looking for mashers, smokers. The cabbies lounged against steering wheels reading the finals. Somewhere the pulmotor squad raced siren-screaming through the night streets. Gutter cleaning machines with massive brushes churning marched up the cross streets. It was too late for visitors, here in this private universe of Porky's.

He opened the peephole and stared out.

Norman Eney stood there, sweat white pearls of hope and need and want on his face. He had come to the Man for his junk. Porky was annoyed; this was the first time—though his address was no great secret—one of his customers had come here to make a connection. He was annoyed—

But the loss of the expected revenue from Tomás had made him fall behind in receipts this week, so he opened.

Norman Eney was not alone.

Out of sight on either side of the apartment door, below the peephole level, they hung at ready. When the door swung inward, they leaped. There were five and Eney. They slammed the door behind themselves, and Porky was afraid, quickly.

But they made no move to hurt him. He knew them: all were junkies, all were customers. What was happening? Who . . .?

"Get your soul together, Porky," one of them said. He was a thin-lipped pianist, hooked through the bag and out the other end with a need and a monkey so big it played King Kong to an SRO audience. He knew them all. They were all jazz men. Some the good, others the screamhorn, but all played that sound. He knew them, knew they could not afford to hurt him. There were other Men on the turf, but none so steady, none so honest, none so businesslike as Porky. He knew they would not hurt him.

"I don't keep my cache here, boys," he assured them. "I'm not taking a fall for holding. So if it's need you got, you'll have to wait till business hours tomorrow." He tried to usher up a smile, but it wouldn't leave where it cowered, down there inside him.

"Let's do that thing, man," said Orville Grande, who played piano at the Concourse Inn. "You need a hat?" It was rhetorical: mid-August, hot, Porky was a non-hatter. They moved him (the center of that group) out the door, closing it softly behind, and down the back stairs to a car. Ralph Shetland (trumpet, The Jazz Lab) drove, and they took Porky back downtown, to the street.

Denny's was a dark waiting place. Chairs lay up on the tables like so many dead animals, feet rigor mortis in the air. The still-moist hush of dead smoke, weak booze, loud voices, bad jazz. It was still there, a million smells and sounds and scrabbling touches imbedded in the whatcolor? walls. Porky was apprehensive, not frightened, merely apprehensive.

(*I'm not a crook. I'm a businessman. I only take care of a need. If they didn't want it, I wouldn't push it. Take away the bottom of the pyramid of hungers and the top collapses. I'm a link, not a totem. There's no need for violence here . . .*)

(*Can you hear me?*)

But he was silent, and they were silent. Even when they pulled the slat-back chair off the bandstand and tied him to it with their belts and silk rep ties. Even then they were nothing but silent. So cool.

It was not important before, but it is now. This is what Porky seemed to be, looking from the outside. He was short, perhaps five six and except for the roll of baby fat about his middle, was not particularly porcine. His face, however, was that peculiar combination of stubble and sallowness combined with pudge and pinpoint eye that immediately conjured the impression of a hog. Hence, Porky. His hair was short, thinned across the temples and forehead, and the nose pugged back revealing two hair-overgrown nostrils. Despite this, he was not an unpleasant-looking man. He was clean, almost to a pathological fault, and carried himself very straight. In other circumstances, in other walks of life, he might easily have been thought of as a credit and a caller. It was not important what Porky seemed to be, before, but it is now. The change was in the offing.

Norman Eney was the first to reach the bandstand. The others followed him, and from the darkness came three more. Nine jazz men. All in a row. See how they blow. *Go!*

Porky watched, and tried to devise a rationale. There was a theme here, a statement, a meaning, they were trying to do, say, convince something. What it was . . . well, perhaps there would be an explanation. Porky was phlegmatic, and his world-view contained the unquenchable belief that whether or not the questions get asked (how many neon bulbs, flickering on Times Square, to

make the riddle high enough and bright enough for the right people to see it?), the answers are always given.

"Do you know what you do, Porky?" Norman Eney asked, "Do you know what you're killing? Every time you let us feed ourselves, you take something. You take it and you bury it, man, and not only we miss it, because it's us, but everybody, all of them, they miss it. We're going to let you know. Tonight."

Porky grasped for a handle. "Why tonight?"

Orville Grande, the pianist, turned on the stool: "Tomás got busted by the fuzz tonight. He was trying to hold up the delly on the corner so he could buy his stock from you." He paused and saw something in the darkness, something nothing, then went on, "He was so sick, man, he tried to split, and they burned him down."

A sax man—a customer named Eli—added, "He's got the last sign on him, man. He's got that big toe tag in the morgue."

"So we're going to show you, Porky," Eney explained. "All these years you been living at the mountains of blindness, not knowing, not caring, just selling, man. Now we're going to show you what you take from us, what we've got."

And they played.

What did they play? They made their sounds in the dark moist cavern of the jazz club, and some of it said things and some of it didn't, but it was them. All of them, from the shallowest part to the deepest niche, and the wail was first lonely then blaring and demanding, driven on a pastel breeze from a corner of the universe where the ones-who-hear-things-always lived. Porky listened, and knew he had *better* listen, because this was a credo for him, there was a test coming and notes should be taken, because this was the final exam. He was not a punk, nor was he a stupid man . . . he had thought himself a businessman, and his morality, his living, was a separateness, not to be confused with what he sold these damned ones. But it now seemed he was wrong. They wailed, they blew, these creatures who had drawn themselves on elbows and knees into his light-life. Now he could not ignore them. He had been thrust into Bedlam with them, and to survive, to ken their meanings, he must pay close attention.

*Willow weep for me in the still of the night when the world was young . . .*

That was it. But not all of it. Men who had done their living without mamas and without papas, in a half light legend of junk and sound. These were the things they said:

*I don't sleep nights; I hear the rhythms.*

*There ain't no good women for me because they don't see me, they see an image, a jazz musician and*

*that's a false bit. I'm lonely, where's a good broad in all this?*

*You got to have roots to sink, a place to go. I'm thirty-seven, man, and it's been a long time since I had a place to lay my head.*

*Take this from me and I'm hollow.*

*If I had a son, I'd want him to be a horn man, it's God right in the stomach, the way to go.*

*This is my truth, all of it. All I want. All I need.*

That was what they played, and that was what they said. So Porky listened, and knew what they wanted. They did not want him to stop pushing, because they would only need it from someone else. They did not want to hurt him for denying Tomás, because that had been the kid's gig, and not Porky's. But they wanted him to *know*. It wasn't the punishment, or whether anything happened, it was merely being *aware*, of knowing what was reality, and what was blindness.

*How long can you live in that thatch hut without windows, without cracks of light, at the foot of the mountains of blindness? How long? Forever, unless you're shown.*

He was trapped, and they were trapped, one by the other—him by demand, and them by supply. But now he could not turn his *non sequiter* eyes on them, without knowing what things boiled in them. Porky listened, and they re-stated their theme.

The sax lifted the dusky night and slid it out on a wave of tired but struggling. Horn came up, trumpet from the sea, and with eyes closed, hunkered down into his shoulders, a man told of the freight cars left on the sidings, still rank from pig and cow, where the army blanket spread lumpy for a needed sleep. The sound of the country, of a hundred million nameless bad ones and bedouins, tramping away from Louisiana graves with a fast jog time-step funeral chant. The wails of lonely and depressed and sick and hungry and down at the socks guys who needed what was roiling and tumbling and kicking in the gut. That was the theme, softly snaggily bangwham repeated. That was it, for all the world (who was Porky only) to hear and put down just right.

Yeah, even Lawrence Welk.

In there somewhere.

And when the sound had flown off, an almost extinct bird with plumage that crumbled to dust motes if touched too tightly—they stared at Porky down from the bandstand, their eyes cat and bird and snake intent. To see if he had seen. To hear if he had heard. To find out if they had written their primer so that even a pusher could dig.

Porky nodded his head. He still lived at the mountains of blindness, but it was different. He could not move, because home is where the

home is, where you've been, and where you can exist, and for Porky this was the only way to make it.

But the difference was the greatest difference in the whole wide world. Now he knew.

Nothing would change.

The pyramid of hungers still existed, because it was the way the scene was run, and who changes it? Not a damned soul. Especially not the damned souls.

Porky knew and said with eyes that were mouths of sense: I'm one of you. I'm not the preying animal, I'm the preyed upon. By life, by need, by circumstance. I'm one with you, and though I can't help you, I understand.

And that, in its own way, was the worst punishment of all. . . .

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HARLAN ELLISON, whose newest novel "Rockabilly" will soon be published by Gold Medal, corresponded the following addenda to this story: "I've tried to make what I think is an important point here, rather than merely telling a story of violence. It would seem to me that the last person to realize he is a criminal is the criminal himself. I can't conceive of even a Hitler thinking of himself as a murderer or maniac. A devoted zealot, perhaps, but not a criminal. The same holds true for the "hero" of this story, Porky the junk-pusher. He considers himself a businessman, his life quite apart from his line of work. And the point that has to be made is not that Porky must be punished, but that he must be aware of his crime. If a man is punished as a criminal—without being aware that he *is* same, then he feels martyred, put upon, wronged. If you make him recognize his sin, then punishment is no longer necessary, because he must come to grips with his transgressions himself. End of sermon."

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## BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Midnight—in the basement of the lonely antique shop. The little group of men and women, grey faces half in the shadows as the candles flickered behind them, were watching the gross old man sitting at the head of the table, complaining when they did not speak fast enough, complaining as bitterly when they skipped over something that caught his attention. . . . Once he pounded on the table, cursing them for fools. Admitted the Government had arrested the leaders—and the others. But *they* were still untouched, weren't they, he sneered, and they would continue to be untouched so long as they did nothing stupid, attracted no attention to themselves, and waited patiently, very patiently. . . . It had been necessary that they meet this once to receive instructions. Now—at a signal in the shadows—they must leave two by two, without appearing to hasten. . . .

Once they were gone the old man couldn't resist a chuckle. What *would* these idiots have said if they'd known *who* he was working for. . . .

# the mummy of cleopatra

*by . . . Sax Rohmer*

BAZARADA was back in Regent's Park after his world tour. The Arab butler, the coloured cook, Laroo, petulant but lovely, all were here again. Buzzy was preparing some new illusion in the workshop at the end of the garden, formerly the study of the journalist to whom the house had belonged.

He had resumed his old place in London.

The long low lounge with its peculiar appointments buzzed with notabilities once more. Mediums were tested and almost invariably exposed; queer things occurred; and Satan, the black puma, had discovered a means of opening his cage and would look in at unexpected moments. I noted, however, that these visits usually took place if the conversation became boring.

Bazarada's sense of humour was peculiar.

One night, however, must always stick in my memory. Dulake, the well-known antique expert, an old acquaintance of Buzzy's and myself had been the only guests at dinner. Laroo, her long lashes lowered disdainfully, recognized that a conference of some sort was to follow,

*Sax Rohmer, who undoubtedly did more than most to add to the mythos of our times when he created Dr. Fu Manchu, could write with great sensitivity of the hidden powers to be found in the shadows of Egypt. And he could, as here, tell a delightful story.*

From: SALUTE TO BAZARADA (1939, Collins)
Published by arrangement with Paul R. Reynolds

and remained consistently disagreeable throughout the meal. I must admit that Dulake's conversation was heavy. Buzzy, Dulake and myself presently retired to the lounge.

"Can we talk now, Bazarada?" said Dulake. "I mean, I take it your friend is discreet?"

"Maurice," Bazarada replied, dropping into an armchair, "is invariably my confidant in any little tangles I may attempt to unravel."

He raised his hand as the Arab entered, bringing to us that amazing array of beverages which Bazarada alone amongst my friends delighted to offer to his guests.

When the Arab had retired:

"You know something of the difficult position in which I find myself," Dulake went on, "but if you are to advise me I shall have to give you full details."

Bazarada nodded, and leaning back in the armchair closed his eyes.

"The situation is this," Dulake went on. "Until recently, only a few Egyptologists were aware that the mummy of Cleopatra had ever been discovered. As all the world knows now, it had been for many years a cherished possession of the Campani family, descendants of the Italian archaeologist who secretly unearthed it. The family today is impoverished. I succeeded in obtaining this unique exhibit on behalf of the British Museum. And the mummy, of course, is now in the Second Egyptian Room, a centre of attraction for thousands of visitors."

The door, which was ajar, opened silently, and a black shape glided like a shadow across the carpet towards Bazarada. Eyes resembling huge emeralds glittered in the lamplight.

"Good God!" Dulake exclaimed. "What is it?"

Satan, the black puma, had come to say good night!

It crouched at Bazarada's feet to be petted, and when Buzzy stroked its beautiful head, uttered a sound which resembled a cat purring through a microphone. The statuesque figure of the Arab was framed in the open doorway.

"I might have warned you," said Bazarada, "but Satan has now earned the privilege of coming to see me sometimes after dinner. Pay your respects to Mr. Dulake, Satan."

The graceful but dangerous animal turned obediently, crossed, and lay down at Dulake's feet. Very gingerly Dulake stroked the wicked black head.

"Now say good night to Maurice!"

Satan moved over to me—and as I looked into those glittering eyes fixed upon mine, I conquered, but only just conquered, a desire to stand up and defend myself. I patted his head, then:

*"Ta alahîna, Sheitan!"* the Arab called.

Purring softly, Satan went out of the room.

"That quite startled me!" Dulake

declared, hurriedly taking a drink, and staring at Bazarada as though he suspected he might be mad. "Where was I? . . . oh, yes! I must try to be brief——"

"If you please," Buzzy murmured.

"In this transaction with the British Museum I was not acting alone I was associated with Benimo. His reputation may be known to you. He is one of the foremost experts in Europe . . . and easily the most brilliant antique faker living to-day!"

"You surprise me, Mr. Dulake," I said. "Some fine pieces have been shown in the Benimo Gallery in Bond Street."

"Quite true. He has handled some of the finest. He knows the real thing when he sees it. . . . I thought I did!"

He paused and uttered a sound not unlike a groan.

"I learned two days ago that the mummy of Cleopatra, now on exhibition in the British Museum, is a *duplicate!* Only one man in the world could have done such a thing. The authentic mummy is still in Benimo's possession!"

This was certainly staggering.

In common with thousands of others I had visited the Egyptian Room when the new exhibit (acquired by the Museum at a cost of twenty thousand pounds) had been made accessible to the public.

The mummy was not unlike other mummies, but the sarcophagus lid which was shown in an adjoining wall-case, represented in relief, very beautifully executed, the face and figure of perhaps the most glamorous woman (if one except Helen of Troy) in human history. Dulake's name had been freely associated with this sensational acquisition, and there had been protests from the Egyptian Government. But Campani's piece of smuggling dated back to a time when the present restrictions had not been applied. The claim of the British Museum was upheld. Backed by the great reputation of Dulake, none had challenged the thing's authenticity. Now, looking across the room, I saw a stricken man. . . .

"Exact though the duplicate is," Dulake muttered, "sooner or later someone will find what I failed to find. On that day I am ruined!"

Bazarada opened his eyes.

"Do I understand," he said, "that this man Benimo, seeing an opportunity to purchase the mummy, got permission to examine it in the Villa Campani?"

"He did. He missed nothing. He took dozens of photographs."

"And prepared such remarkable duplicates—of the mummy and the sarcophagus lid—that *you* were deceived?"

"Exactly what happened! You see, he is a perverted genius."

"But the mummy!" I exclaimed.

"Is that of a priestess of the same period, which Benimo had had in

his possession for a long time. The peculiar wrappings and other features he reproduced. The painted sarcophagus lid he made patiently in his own workshop!"

"What was his object?"

"Revenge! Three times in my capacity as expert I have detected forgeries in famous collections which have been traced to Benimo's workshop! He has always managed to produce evidence to show where the pieces were acquired. Myself, I knew that he had made them! Now —I have lent my name, my reputation, and as his agent have sold one of his duplicates to the British Museum!"

There was a long period of silence. Bazarada's house was curiously silent at night. Dulake was watching Buzzy almost feverishly. Buzzy's eyes remained closed.

"Of course, you dare not admit your error to the Museum?"

"Impossible!"

"Where are the authentic pieces?"

"In a specially made case in Benimo's office behind the Gallery. The case is kept in a large cupboard; and the cupboard is locked."

"I will look in there tomorrow. That part is easy. Did he offer to sell?"

"Yes," Dulake groaned . . . "for fifteen thousand pounds!"

On the following day Bazarada and I visited the British Museum.

We made for the Egyptian Rooms. The mummy of Cleopatra in a case in the centre of the Second Room was difficult to approach, so dense was the throng about it. But the top of the sarcophagus, a portrait in relief of the queen which occupied an adjoining wall-case, claimed an even larger audience. Finally, however, we penetrated to the mummy, and Buzzy ran his fingers lightly over the glass lid.

"Rudimentary," he murmured.

We made our way through the throng to the second exhibit.

Looking at it and realizing that it was the work of a modern craftsman, I knew why Dulake had called him a genius. It might have been moulded on a woman's body, so flawless was the anatomy. Cleopatra was represented diaphanously veiled. Her figure was exquisite, and the painted face, with the long darkened eyes, held a mocking witchery.

As we extricated ourselves from the crowd in the Egyptian Rooms:

"Would you take my card to Dr. Letchmere?" said Buzzy to an attendant.

"He is not here at the moment, sir."

"The Assistant Curator, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Warrington is in his office."

A few moments later an intellectual-looking man, wearing spectacles, but having an athletic build and great vigor of movement and address, came up eagerly to Bazarada.

"What can I do for you, sir?" he asked. "My name is Warrington. Your name is familiar to me."

"I was wondering about the exact procedure," said Buzzy in his clear voice, "in regard to obtaining expert opinion about proposed purchases. Can I throw myself upon your mercy and ask you to inspect them?"

"Certainly—it would be a pleasure! We are always delighted to help in this way."

"They are rather hefty pieces!"

"No difficulty about that, sir, if you will look after the transport."

Mr. Warrington smiled happily.

"Do you mean that if I pay the carriage to the Museum and back again, you will give your opinion without charge?"

"We should be honoured."

"Many thanks," said Bazarada; "but, as I told you, these pieces are rather large." We were standing near an entrance door, and Buzzy was stroking the lock as though he loved it. "I assume you have some sort of store where heavy stuff is deposited?"

"Naturally," said Mr. Warrington in his enthusiastic way. "If you will be good enough to come along I will show you the store."

We descended the main staircase and then went down further. Mr. Warrington opened a door and I found myself in a place not unlike a dock warehouse: crates, boxes, parcels, were stacked about in orderly confusion.

"Big stuff is delivered here direct by the lorries," Mr. Warrington explained; "the smaller things, rings, scarabs, and so forth, don't come in here at all. But if you want an opinion on your proposed purchases, Mr. Bazarada——"

"Pardon!"—Buzzy raised his hand, smiling—"there is no *mister*. Bazzer as in jazzer, and ardour as in love!"

"Oh! I'm sorry—Bazarada! If you will arrange for them to be delivered here, directly Dr. Letchmere has had an opportunity of looking them over, we'll notify you, and expect you to take 'em away."

"I am much obliged," said Buzzy. "Up to what time could I deliver them?"

"Get them here before five, when this place closes, and I'll do my best with the doctor to have them examined on the following morning. That's the office, through there, where the stuff is checked in."

"How do the clerks get out if the doors are closed at five?"

"Office communicates direct with the street. So I shall expect your pieces before five tomorrow."

"I can arrange that. I suppose things are quite safe here?" Buzzy was fondling the door which communicated with the main corridor. "You lock up the whole building at night?"

"Rather!" said Mr. Warrington. "Not only lock up, but we've got patrols, you know."

"Is that so?"

"Well—it's necessary. A party takes over directly the museum is closed. It's all searched—these fellows know their job—all doors locked, but certain lights left on, of course; and then all the rooms are patrolled at regular intervals; a precaution not only against burglars, but against fire."

"How often do the patrols go around?"

"Oh!" said Mr. Warrington, laughing gleefully, "I don't suggest that we could keep *you out*—er—Bazarada! But the average burglar would find it a tough job. They go round every hour, and register their visits on time-clocks in the various rooms. Unless you steal them yourself, your Egyptian antiquities will be quite safe here, I assure you."

THREE nights later I assisted in a burglary at the Benimo Gallery in Bond Street.

In a small lorry which either belonged to the Trans-Co Express Company or which was an exact duplicate of one of their vans, I was driven to Bond Street. Dan was the driver. Edmundson, chief carpenter, and Bazarada, both dressed in overalls but wearing the Company's caps, sat inside.

I wore a normal lounge suit—also a moustache which was not my property; and my hair had been turned grey. I sat beside Dan.

This was an hour when Bond Street is empty as Bond Street ever can be; it was seven-thirty of a perfect spring evening when the lorry pulled up before Benimo's premises.

"Speed is the essence of this contract!" said Bazarada, as he walked to the locked door. "You know your lines, Maurice? We've nothing to fear . . . except somebody from the Express Company!"

He looked quickly right and left. One or two business people detained late were hurrying along. A few provincials were staring into lighted shop windows. A bus approached from Oxford Street. A taxi was crawling by.

Dan and Edmundson had lighted cigarettes and were leaning up against the lorry when Buzzy opened the door. As he entered, they followed him in. . . .

For me, an ordeal began.

I studied the face of every passer-by. For everyone of them might be a detective, or, worse, a representative of the Trans-Co Express Company!

Probably I had been there no longer than five minutes, but to me it seemed like several hours—when a constable strolled into view. ("You know your lines, Maurice?")

Buzzy had assured me many times that I was the world's worst actor. I suppose my portrayal of nonchalance was a poor one. The policeman stopped. He stared at the open door of the Benimo Gallery—then stared at the lettering "Trans-Co Express Company" on

the lorry—and finally stared at me.

"What's going on?" he inquired.

He was a modern constable. His cultured voice disarmed me. I struggled desperately to remember my "lines." . . . Vaguely, they came back to me.

"I'm frightfully annoyed," I said, "and so is Mr. Benimo. But some things have been bought by an American customer, and he insists that they must be shipped in the *Queen Mary*—which sails in the morning!"

The constable studied me in a way which I did not like.

"Do you represent Mr. Benimo or the Express Company?"

"Mr. Benimo. The Express people are bringing the stuff out now."

As if the divine gift of prophecy had descended upon me, at this moment out came Dan and Edmundson, carrying between them a large crate!

"Go easy, boys!" Bazarada directed, following and closing the door—which he appeared to lock. "This stuff is valuable. You're not carrying coal!"

He passed me a bunch of keys as Dan and Edmundson loaded the crate on to the lorry.

"Are you the foreman of this party?" the constable asked.

"Sure. It's a lousy job. We're starting for Southampton now!"

And under the eyes of the law, we started—but not for Southampton!

On the following morning I searched the newspapers anxiously expecting to find a bold headline: "Daring robbery in Bond Street."

But I found nothing.

"Rudimentary reasoning!" said Bazarada, when I arrived at Regent's Park. "There was nothing else in the cupboard in Benimo's office, and I left the cupboard locked as I found it. The chances of his opening it are a hundred to one in our favour."

"Evidently the policeman was satisfied. He's not checked up."

"Any normal policeman would have been satisfied."

We went into the workshop. Edmundson, looking hot but happy, was in there. He grinned as we entered.

I saw that a great part of the place was taken up by four massive packing cases, heavily made things in which one might have shipped machinery. The name *Bazarada* was painted in red on all of them, and they were plastered with labels: "Fragile"—"This side up"—"Move with Care." So far as I could see they were solidly nailed down and ready for the road.

"In this one," said Buzzy, pointing, "we have the authentic sarcophagus lid and the mummy."

I stared uncomprehendingly.

"But what of the other three?"

"Examine any one of them you like; and tell me how, without using a jemmy, it could possibly be opened."

I examined one at random. It was an oak case, some seven feet long and perhaps three feet wide. It was very heavy. It had metal bands resembling those seen around a cask. I could see the heads of many long nails where the top had been secured in place.

"Could you open it, sir?" Edmundson asked.

"Not with my bare hands."

I glanced at Bazarada and saw his upper lip twitching.

"Look out of the window for a moment, Maurice."

I looked out along the garden and up toward the house. I saw Laroo in beach pyjamas, draped in a hammock swung between two trees. Under the hammock, Satan the black puma lay asleep on the grass.

"Turn around now."

I turned. The top of the case had been opened like the lid of a box!

I looked inside. The interior was thickly padded. I saw that it was fitted as a bed with a comfortable pillow at one end. . . .

"What's this?" I exclaimed.

"For you, Maurice," Bazarada murmured. "I hope you'll be comfortable."

"What!"

"There is plenty of ventilation, but the air holes are concealed by the labels, which are printed on gauze."

Amongst many strange memories of adventures shared with Bazarada, it is difficult to put my finger now upon that which touched the high point of the bizarre, but there were few to compare with the moment when just before four o'clock that afternoon, Buzzy carried Laroo from the house down to the workshop. She was completely swathed in mummy wrappings!

Her features, which in the case of Cleopatra were covered by a fine gold mask, alone remained visible. And that bewitching face with widely opened violet eyes, looking out from the wrappings, sticks in my memory as something unbelievably grotesque.

"I'll be stone dead before we're through, Buzzy," she complained. "I know this is your idea of fun, but to me it's plain hell."

"Don't use coarse language, Laroo," said Buzzy sternly. "You pick it up from Dan."

"Nobody would need lessons from anybody," said Laroo, "who felt the way I do."

However, she was lifted into one of the padded boxes, and made comparatively comfortable. The wrappings were one of Bazarada's ingenious fakes, and actually, Laroo's arms were free. Diving down under the cushions she produced a packet of cigarettes and a lighter.

"That's out!" said Buzzy sharply. "Give them to me."

"Listen, Buzzy," she pleaded—"how can it matter till we get there? I'm going to die, anyway. I might as well start smoking now,"

Bazarada removed the cigarettes and the lighter. Laroo twisted her head aside and refused to speak to any of us. When the case was closed by Edmundson, it looked as though crowbars alone could open it. From within came a plaintive voice:

"I always knew you hated me, Buzzy, but I didn't know how much."

My turn came, and with a prayer to the gods of Egypt (whom we were probably offending) I was secured in another case. I was more than mystified and not a little alarmed when I heard Bazarada's voice directing Edmundson and two other men:

"The big case first—very gently—the contents are priceless. Easy now!"

Heavy breathing and shuffling footsteps indicated that the case was being carried out of the workshop to the lorry which I knew was waiting. Then came my turn, and under Bazarada's directions the case containing me was lifted up and carried out. As it slid into place on the lorry:

"Whew!" a voice exclaimed, "that was a heavy lot! What's in it? A lump of the Pyramid or something?"

So the strange business went on and I grew more and more mystified. That I was destined to spend a night inside the British Museum, I knew. But what was Buzzy supposed to do? I heard him talking and giving directions right up to the time that the lorry moved away. . . .

My feelings as I lay there and presently knew that I had been deposited in the Museum, I find now to be all but indescribable. A number of people were moving about outside, and I expected that at any moment one of them would detect the trick, open the lid and reveal me lying there, a palpable culprit.

This did not occur, however.

"Ah, Dr. Letchmere!" (Buzzy's voice.) "It is good of you to spare the time. If I bring two of my own men along in the morning, perhaps you would look over these things for me?"

"I promise to do so. I shall be delighted. But remember—I'm not infallible."

According to Buzzy's instructions my costume was reduced to a vest, trousers and a pair of rubber-soled shoes. But nevertheless, largely imaginary, I began to experience a sense of suffocation. I became cramped. For what seemed like hours, there were people moving about me. As long as I could hear voices, I was terrified to move. I knew how to open my prison from the inside. It was a perfectly simple matter. But Buzzy had prohibited my doing so until I had the word from him.

The problem that was bothering me more and more was this: Where was Bazarada?

Silence came at last—followed by a dim sound of marching footsteps and the banging of many doors. Then:

"You say that the Anubis figure is in the big case?" came a voice which I recognized as that of Dr. Letchmere; and I knew that the doors communicating with the Museum had been opened. "I am very keen to see it, Bazarada. Now I must hurry along. Are you coming my way?"

"I am going to walk," Buzzy's voice replied; "but my car is waiting. My man can drop you anywhere. Surely the Museum staff has not yet left?"

"No, no! The librarians' duties will detain them for at least another hour; and there is quite a lot of office work to clear up."

"The place is not really given over to the watchmen until——"

"Until about nine o'clock, I suppose."

"Yes, I see."

The voices died away. I heard the doors being locked—opened a moment later—relocked. I gave myself over to despair. A dreadful silence fell. It was broken by a muffled voice.

"Maurice! Maurice!—can you hear me?"

"Yes, Laroo."

"We're going to be hand-in-hand before a police court magistrate in the morning."

"Quiet, Laroo! Someone may be listening."

"Give me a good character, Maurice; say I was a nice girl before I met Buzzy."

"Be quiet, you little devil!" came Bazarada's voice, low, but very distinct. "I didn't count on Dr. Letchmere keeping me talking in his office. Slipping him and getting back here was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Not another word—either of you."

There was a click—a dim sound of the impact of wood on wood—another click . . . and silence.

Then very noisily the door was opened. I discovered that through the gauze covering of one of the air holes I could look out. I looked out. I saw a man in the uniform of a police officer, except that he wore no helmet, shining a torch around the room. Apparently satisfied, he retired, and closed the doors.

"I think we have an hour," came Buzzy's voice. "Time to stretch ourselves—but no smoking."

He was in the fourth case!

THE tedium of those hours of waiting I shall never forget. Several times we were visited by the patrol, but the visits were formal and brief. And then, at last, Bazarada called us to action.

Laroo sitting up in a constrained position, and I stepping out of the case to stretch cramped limbs, Bazarada crossed silently to the doors which communicated with the Museum. He used the torch.

"This side of the door is fixed so

that it closes automatically, Maurice," he said. "I want you to hold it open. I'm going to take a look around. I may come back in a hurry."

He fumbled for a moment with the lock—and the door was open. I held it as he slipped out. I saw a dim vista where gigantic stone figures looked, where pools of shadow lay; I seemed to come under the spell of the ancient gods. Bazarada merged into these shadows.

"Maurice," Laroo whispered, "I'm terrified—honestly, I'm terrified. I feel like something dead and stuffed!"

"Quiet!" I warned.

"It's so hard."

I listened intently, but could hear no sound. I estimated that five minutes passed—seven minutes—ten minutes . . . and then a vague shape disentangled itself from the deeper shadow. Bazarada was beside me.

"Come on," he said; "the road's clear. We'll start now. Take the torch."

We had rehearsed the elaborate routine that afternoon so often that I found I had forgotten it. But as Buzzy stooped, picked up Laroo lightly and placed her over his shoulder, it all came back to me.

I grabbed up an imitation gold mask which had lain beside me in the case and followed. I placed a wedge—which I had in my trouser pocket—between the double doors so that they could not wholly close. Having accomplished this and pocketed the torch I had to hurry to overtake Bazarada. I caught him on the stairs whch lead up to the Egyptian Rooms.

We mounted silent as ghosts. The place was eerily lighted, the shadows were phantomesque. He set Laroo down. Owing to her wrappings it was difficult for her to walk. He addressed himself to the lock of the door.

I listened for footsteps, voices, fighting down panic. And presently the door of the Egyptian Room opened quite silently. . . .

Bazarada lifted Laroo and walked through the first room and into the second. One lamp was burning. It was uncanny to stand there in that half-light surrounded by the relics, the actual bodies, of those who had once been powerful in Egypt. Laroo's eyes appealed to me. As Bazarada stepped to the case which contained the synthetic mummy of Cleopatra—and without any apparent difficulty opened it—I moved up beside her.

"Don't look so frightened," I whispered. "You know Buzzy never slips up."

"I know he doesn't," she whispered back, "but do the police know it?"

Side by side we stood, Laroo in her mummy wrappings and I in my vest and trousers, watching the master craftsman at work.

Delicately he disengaged the mummy, raising it inch by inch and finally getting it into position

where he could lift it bodily. The operation takes a short time to relate, but it took a long time to perform.

He signalled to me. I remembered my cue.

Squeezing Laroo's shoulder sympathetically, I handed the mask to Bazarada, shouldered the mummy and set out along the Egyptian Room.

I imagined footsteps following me. I imagined voices below. Actually, no one intercepted me, and I came to the door of the storeroom, my heart beating wildly, perspiration on my forehead.

In a state of frank terror, I carried out the rest of my routine, which consisted of placing the duplicate Cleopatra on a shelf in the big crate—the side of which was open. The real mummy lay below, and the bottom of the crate was occupied by the sarcophagus lid.

Long as this task seemed to take me, for I must work silently, I had finished it and was anxiously waiting when Bazarada returned.

"Just in the nick of time!" he said. "Patrol on the way!"

He closed the big case, closed that from which Laroo was missing, gave me a signal, and I retired to my hiding-place.

Three or four minutes later came the grating of a key in the lock . . . lights flashed as I saw dimly through the peep-hole.

The door was locked again—and there was silence.

Now came the worst ordeal of all. For I knew that Laroo was in the case in the Egyptian Room, and I know how frightened she would be when the watchman passed through. I had argued with Bazarada about the necessity of this, but he had convinced me.

"I can easily get the fake mummy out in a few minutes," he had explained, "but it would be quite impossible to replace the real one in time. It's going to be so difficult to fit it into the rests. A mummy can't help. Laroo can adjust herself."

And, in practice, as I knew now, he had been proven right.

At any moment I expected an outcry—the blowing of a police whistle—I knew not what! But nothing occurred.

"Don't move, Maurice," Buzzy warned.

I lay still for minutes, every one of which held a thousand seconds, and then: "All right," I heard.

I opened the case and stepped out.

Bazarada placed a torch in position and we set to work. The mummy of Cleopatra was lifted from the big crate. I held the swing door open and watched Bazarada place the mummy outside on the floor. He returned, and took out the painted sarcophagus lid. Shouldering the mummy, he disappeared into the shadows. I fixed the wedge, and carrying the lid, followed him.

By this time, under the guidance

of my imperturbable and brilliant friend, I had in some measure conquered the nervousness which earlier had enslaved me. A zest for this lawless but worthy adventure seized upon me. Hurrying along carrying my strange burden, as I mounted the steps to the Egyptian Room and set it down upon the landing, I thought that a burglar's life must be full of thrills.

Again Bazarada opened the door. Where locks were concerned, the man was a wizard; nor do I know, to this day, how he conquered them. And presently I found myself, sarcophagus lid on shoulder, following him.

Any break in the routine, now, would mean ruin. And in that dim light, surrounded by relics of a mysterious past, nervous promptings came again.

The mummy with its gold mask lying in the case in the centre of the room was uncannily like that which I had removed. No wonder the patrol had noticed no difference! But as Bazarada raised the glass case, the mummy sat up and removed the mask.

"Buzzy," said Laroo, "never ask me to do a thing like this again! I'm ruined. I'm a tired old woman."

He lifted her out. I supported her, and big eyes stared at me out of a pale face.

"Oh, Maurice!" she whispered.

Bazarada signalled to me and together we raised the mummy. At this moment I recognized how delicate was the task of adjusting it properly. Before it was completed, Bazarada darted to the neighboring wall case. There came a faint scraping as he fumbled with the lock, and then—the door was open.

"Routine, Maurice! I can do the rest here. This part is up to you!"

I collected my wandering thoughts, lifted the painted lid from its place and laid it on the floor. Then, as quickly as I could, I set the authentic lid there, and attached it to the fastenings which kept it upright against the wall . . . I reclosed the glass door and heard the catch snap.

Bazarada was still busy over the mummy, working with quiet efficiency as though he had been in his own workshop. I suppose the click of the lock told him I had accomplished this part of my duties, for: "Jump, Maurice!" he whispered; "I have still a lot to do—and there's nothing to cheer about until we're back in Regent's Park!"

I shouldered the faked lid and started out silently along the room. There was something inspiring in Bazarada's presence; for no sooner was I on the dimly lighted landing than I began to imagine a police trap set for me downstairs. However, labouring heavily, for the lid was no light load, I found myself once more in the store-room.

The interval which elapsed between the moment when I got the thing into the big crate and the arrival of Bazarada was so long as

to be agonizing. My imagination was playing me tricks . . . for I thought I heard distant voices, muffled footsteps. The setting of Cleopatra in her appointed place had proved a longer job than even Bazarada had anticipated.

When (Laroo, mummy-wrapped, draped across his shoulder) he appeared, I could not control a gasp of relief.

"Quick!"—his voice was hoarse. "It's touch and go this time!"

He set down Laroo in her hiding-place. I could not see her face but she was silent—with fright, I assumed. He closed the big crate, dashed back and removed the wedge from the door (part of my duty but I had forgotten it) and gave me an urgent signal.

I imprisoned myself. . . .

No more than half a minute had elapsed when the patrol came in!

As footsteps on the stone floor died away:

"All right," came Bazarada's voice. "All out. One of the trickiest things I ever pulled off, Maurice!"

"Buzzy," Laroo moaned, as we stood there in the torchlight—"we don't have to stay here all night?"

"We don't. And you were wonderful, Laroo. Your impersonation of a mummy was life-like."

"You are all pig. Just nothing but plain pig."

We went out through the office, relocking all doors behind us. There was a breathless moment just as we were about to leave, when a constable tramped past outside. But as he disappeared in the distance, I saw the headlights of Buzzy's car.

Dan drove up. We bundled in.

"At eight a.m.," said Buzzy, "I shall be here with the lorry to recover the four cases. I shall say that I have changed my mind about purchasing the contents. My personal explanation to Dr. Letchmere can follow later. A most successful evening, Maurice."

"Most," Laroo murmured.

She was leaning up against my shoulder, half asleep.

NEXT morning, the story of the Bond Street burglary broke into big headlines. Benimo had opened the cupboard. The exact nature of his loss was not mentioned.

Bazarada got into touch with Benimo. Tactfully, he explained that, owing to his circle of queer acquaintances, he happened to know the man who had stolen the crate from the Gallery—and who now found the contents to be unmarketable, except to Benimo.

Benimo agreed to pay five thousand pounds ransom for the return of his property—and his property was duly returned.

His cheque had been cashed before he found out that he had paid for his own workmanship. And five hospitals received each a donation of one thousand pounds from Bazarada, "in recognition of skilful and unselfish labours."

# harbor of hate

*by . . . George Fielding Eliot*

THE GREAT transport dipped its nose and glided gently downward toward the calm, sparkling waters of the harbor of Puerto Serrano. Even at that height, the twin white towers of the Fortress of San Silvestre dominated the harbor. The sun shone on them brightly, as it shone on the waters which lapped their foundations; but for all that, Frayne shuddered as he looked down upon them.

He had been in Puerto Serrano before, and he had seen the wretched victims of a dead tyrant brought out from their chains and their sunless, water-seeping dungeons—broken, hopeless wrecks of humanity.

He tore his eyes away from San Silvestre and looked at the grim, gray cruiser, flying the Stars and Stripes, which lay at anchor near the harbor entrance. Beside her, a high-sided transport swarmed with the khaki of massed marines. A rear admiral's two-starred flag fluttered from the cruiser's masthead.

The stage was set for another Central American "incident," with

*Major George Fielding Eliot, the distinguished military analyst and author of many works in this field, has also, as readers of this magazine know, written considerable suspense material. There is an interesting timeless quality to this story of intrigue in the Caribbean.*

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its dénouement in a complacent radiogram:

*The marines have landed and have the situation well in hand.*

Frayne swore softly beneath his breath. He was thinking of the orders given him by his grave-faced chief in Washington, who spoke with such quiet authority across his broad desk.

"Go down and stop the trouble, Frayne. You know the country. You know the president. There's something wrong. President Aranaga hasn't suddenly gone mad after all these years. Get to the bottom of those queer stories about him. You'll have full authority to act as you think best, but don't use that authority unless you have to. Above all, I want no landings, no bloodshed. We're building up a policy of friendly coöperation with the Latin-American countries, and we don't propose to have that thrown away because of this tempest in a teapot. On the other hand—well, we can't permit American property to be sequestered. It's a delicate situation, Frayne. Do the job your own way, but do it. . . ."

Lieutenant-Commander Philip Frayne, U. S. N., unhooked his safety-belt and stood up as the plane taxied to a long low wharf. In white service uniform, he was ostensibly the bearer of dispatches to the American Minister, dispatches which he carried in a leather case tucked under his arm.

Actually, he was the most trusted agent of the Naval Intelligence Service, with a record as yet unmarred by failure. As yet, he reflected a trifle bitterly—but when they set a man to do the impossible. . . .

He ducked his head as he swung out of the cabin to the landing-float. There, in the bright sunshine, a young officer of the cruiser *Hartford,* stood waiting for him.

"Hello, Bobby! All set?"

"All set," Bob Cotton said, eagerly. "I had your radio yesterday, and I got in touch with your man by night. He has rounded up four or five of your former friends—"

"Easy lad—easy." Frayne interrupted. He nodded toward the crowd of gaping bystanders who were held in check by several of the cruiser's seamen and a couple of little brown police.

Frayne took leave of the Marine Corps pilot who had flown him down. Then with his friend, Lieutenant Cotton, he pushed through the crowd, heading for the American Legation.

"Big show on at the Legation this afternoon—reception for Morales," Cotton informed him.

Frayne shot the other a quick look. "For Morales?" He frowned, silencing the impulsive Cotton once more.

"What about a tall, cool one, old man?" Cotton asked, as they came to the open door of a little *cantina* familiar to both of them.

"Good idea," Frayne agreed.

They entered the dark coolness

of the barroom, and as they ordered their drinks, several loungers stared at them curiously. A thin man in slouchy white duck who had followed them from the landing-place glanced in at the door and passed on.

Another man, wearing the rough dress of a stevedore, sidled along the bar till he stood by Frayne's side. He ordered a beer in a hoarse voice. Then, as the bartender turned away, the stevedore spoke from the corner of his mouth. "Tonight at seven, *señor*. Calle San Martin. The old house."

*"Bueno,"* murmured Frayne without moving his lips.

The man took his beer and went to a back table. Frayne and Cotton finished their drinks and strolled out again into the narrow street.

"That's that," said Frayne. "Let's go on to the Legation."

He noted few outward changes in Puerto Serrano since he had last been there, five years before. The same bare-footed peons walked stolidly along with their donkey-loads of produce; the same ramshackle taxies clattered madly over the cobbled pavements; and the same little knots of loungers stood on the corners of the Plaza, in the shade of the trees before the great cathedral. Even the same urchins besought him to buy *"Dulce—dulce"* from fly-covered baskets.

And yet, it was not quite the same under the surface. Men eyed each other with furtive suspicion. There was little of the carefree laughter of former days. Puerto Serrano seemed to be waiting for something.

In the courtyard of the Legation were half a dozen big cars. One bore the presidential arms.

"Is Don Carlos here?" Frayne asked of the doorman.

"No, *señor*. Alas, the good Don Carlos is still at his *hacienda* in the country. They say his health is not improved as yet. *Señor* Morales came in his car."

Frayne nodded, concealing his wonder. Cotton took him up to a room on the second floor, where he freshened his appearance. An *attaché* took away the dispatches. A few moments later, Frayne and Cotton descended to the great reception hall. There, in the center of the room, with the American Minister at his side, apparently hanging on his every word, General Francisco Fernando Morales, vice president of Serrano and commander-in-chief of the army, stood discoursing on the state of the nation.

The big room was full of Serranisto officers in gaudy uniforms, local civilians in starched linen suits, and dusky-eyed ladies, red-lipped, dark-haired. There was also a scattering of Americans—worried-looking civilians, bronzed young marine officers in their well-scrubbed khaki, and a few naval officers in white.

Crowded though the room was, the murmur of conversation was surprisingly soft. Nobody wanted to miss what Morales was saying. He dominated the room. He was accustomed to dominate any spot he graced with his distinguished presence.

He was not a large man. His blue uniform—adorned with liberal gold lace and huge epaulettes allowed a Serranisto general—fitted him beautifully. His boots were polished like mirrors, and the set of his sword-belt was perfect. Above his tight collar, his sleek head bulged, oddly large for his torso. His swarthy face was round, heavy-set, animated only by the extraordinary restlessness of his black eyes.

"How happy I would be," he was saying as Frayne entered, "to coöperate with Your Excellency for the improvement of the relations between our countries. But alas—my hands are tied. I can say no more." He shrugged sorrowfully.

The minister murmured something which Frayne did not catch.

"Alas, I cannot even do that!" Morales boomed in answer. "Humiliating as it is to admit the fact publicly, I, vice president of this republic, cannot even guarantee Your Excellency an interview with my president. Don Carlos is seeing no one save a certain few he desires to see. He is—in ill health."

The slight pause conveyed eloquently how, for his part, the astute General Morales doubted this subterfuge of illness on the part of his chief. His tone hinted that those few with whom the president delighted to confer were not only the enemies of the United States, but persons whom he, Morales, would care to receive only in dungeons.

Frayne saw the American minister glance significantly at red-faced old Admiral Manning.

"Morales is clever," he thought, eyeing the Serranisto vice president. "Damned clever."

He moved a little closer, exchanging a word here and there with officers he knew. He wanted to present himself to the minister, but he wanted more to get a close-up of Morales.

Suddenly he found his path blocked by a rat-faced little man in the uniform of a Serrano colonel. Beady eyes twinkled at him wickedly; a pointed nose seemed to quiver with suppressed antagonism as the colonel favored Frayne with a stiff bow.

"Commander Frayne! What a pleasure to see you here!" squeaked a voice for all the world like a rusty door-hinge.

"It is a small world, *señor*—ah, pardon me—Colonel Uriarte," Frayne replied. "Are you still chief of police here?"

"Minister of Police," Uriarte corrected, eyeing Frayne with open malevolence. They had encountered

each other once before, and Uriarte had not forgotten the humiliating defeat of that encounter.

"My congratulations!" Frayne murmured.

"You are staying long, commander?" asked Uriarte bluntly.

"That depends on the minister," Frayne answered. "I have brought him dispatches by plane, from Washington. He may have his replies ready tonight, perhaps—or perhaps tomorrow. Who can say?"

"I fear," murmured Uriarte, "that you will find our climate less healthy than at the time of your previous visit. This is the fever season, you know. I trust that your dispatches will be ready soon, *amigo mío.*"

"Is it the fever which has confined the good Don Carlos to his country estate?" Frayne asked blandly.

"Ill-timed curiosity is sometimes a more fatal disease than fever! It is a fact that you would do well to remember." Uriarte passed on without leave-taking.

He was afraid, Frayne reflected, desperately afraid of what Frayne might find out. And he had permitted that fear to betray him into indiscretion. It was a point for Frayne.

There was a stir near the main entrance of the room. Glancing that way, Frayne saw a slender girl, wrapped in a black lace mantilla, pushing her way through the crowd. By her side was a tall young officer in the sky-blue uniform of the president's bodyguard. He was expostulating with her, pleading, arguing—but she held her course, pausing only once to thrust aside a hand which he had ventured to lay upon her arm. In that moment, Frayne caught a glimpse of her face, an exquisite, olive-skinned oval. Her great dark eyes blazed now with a desperate purpose.

"Elena!" The word rose unbidden to Frayne's lips; but the discipline which years of duty had laid upon those lips held it soundless.

The sight of Elena Aranaga, daughter of the president, brought Frayne swift memories of happier hours, spent beneath the bougainvillas which shaded her father's garden. She did not see him now.

"Morales!" Her voice, high and clear as a bell, drew all eyes to her.

She stood before the vice president, her mantilla flung back, her brilliant gaze fixed on Morales.

A deathly silence fell upon the long room, and all eyes watched as Morales bowed, smiling a little.

"*Señorita,* I am at your feet," he murmured politely.

"I have waited for this moment!" she said, distinctly. "For this opportunity to ask you publicly, on neutral ground, one question. Francisco Morales, where is my father?"

Morales' smile grew soothing, though his eyes were deadly. "You are overwrought, *señorita,*" he said gently. He turned to the staring American minister with a shrug

that was eloquence itself. "She has lucid intervals, poor girl," he explained, "and sometimes they allow her too much freedom. I regret that the peace of Your Excellency's Legation should have been disturbed. Colonel Uriarte, will you escort the *señorita—"*

"You lie, Morales!" Elena's voice was chill with a terrible contempt, but she was keeping her head. "You have murdered—"

Uriarte's hand closed over her mouth. Aided by two other officers, he started to lead her toward the door. The tall youth in uniform sprang forward, ripping out his sword. Only a quick dodge saved Uriarte. Elena stood free for a single moment—and in that moment, Frayne reached her side.

"Those stairs over there—quickly! You can do nothing more here," he whispered. She gave him a swift glance of recognition, then turned and darted past gaping spectators to reach the stairs and vanish upwards.

The young officer whirled on Morales, his naked sword still in his hand. "You will answer to me, Morales." His free hand came up, struck the man's cheek a sharp, resounding blow.

Morales' swarthy face paled slowly to a sort of dirty ash-color. It was the pallor of anger, not of fear.

"Take him away!" he choked out.

Uriarte and three or four others rushed suddenly upon the young man from behind.

"No," he shouted. "I—" Uriarte's pistol butt smashed into his mouth. Blood spattered, and the young officer's shouted words ended in a gasp of agony. Closely surrounded by Uriarte's aids, he was dragged out into the anteroom.

Frayne darted through a side door and along a short passage. A small, curtained alcove here gave access to the anteroom from the far side. Beyond the door sounded a muffled explosion, and Frayne opened the door and stepped in.

The young officer was lying on the floor, blood welling from a bullet-wound in his left breast. Near one outflung hand lay a pistol, with a faint wisp of smoke ascending from the muzzle. Uriarte and three or four other Serrano officers scowled at Frayne as he strode forward.

"He has shot himself, poor fellow," Uriarte said quickly. *"Diós!* What a fool a man will make of himself over a woman! We tried to stop him, but he was too quick for us."

"Stand back, please, *señores,"* Frayne requested. "This is American soil, and I represent the minister until he comes. Colonel Uriarte, you will have the goodness to send one of your officers to summon His Excellency."

He knelt as Uriarte turned to comply. His sharp eyes had discerned a faint movement of the

boy's crushed and bloody lips. Just a whisper—a very faint whisper—came from the battered mouth.

"Torre—Blanco. . . . Tell Elena —" The whisper broke on a rattling gasp. The young life was over.

Frayne rose to his feet, to find Uriarte's eyes fixed upon him. The man had turned back suspiciously.

"He spoke, Commander? He said something?" Uriarte inquired. "It is, of course, my affair to record all dying statements, bequests—"

"He said nothing," Frayne answered blandly.

He turned to face the agitated minister who came puffing into the room. Close behind the minister came Morales, all unbidden.

"Poor fellow," said he, looking down at the dead man. "But what would you? He loved the girl. Her mind—it is gone. And so he no longer wishes to live. It is very sad."

"Who is he? I have seen him before, I think," the minister muttered, half-choked by horror.

"My aid, Captain Pedro de Ferrara," Morales answered. "This will be a blow to his family." He flicked a quick look at Uriarte.

Frayne, standing in the background, said nothing, but his mind was active. He was beginning to understand many things about this murdered boy—Morales' aid, and the lover of Elena Aranaga. The two loyalties had obviously led the poor fellow on diverging paths. There was food for thought. . . .

"Where is the *señorita?*" Morales asked the minister suddenly.

Before the diplomat could reply Frayne spoke, "I will inquire, sir."

He went quickly out of the room, closing the door behind him, conscious all the time of Uriarte's rodent eyes upon him. He went up the main stairs two at a time. A servant indicated his own room, saying that the *señorita* had inquired for it.

Within that room, a faint perfume lingered. Elena was gone, but on the pillow was a note to him, scribbled hastily in pencil:

> I dare not stay here. They would kill me. My father is not at his *hacienda*—that I swear. But I feel he is alive somewhere. Find him, for the love of God!
>
> E.

Frayne burned the note in a copper ashtray, reduced the ashes to powder and blew them out of the window.

Then he went back downstairs to report to the minister. His face was devoid of expression, but his eyes were dark with thought.

In a musty back room of an ancient house on the Calle San Martin, two men stood before a barred window, looking out into a moonlit *patio*. One wore the green field uniform of a sergeant in the Regiment Miranda. His face was hidden in the shadow beneath the visor of his cap. The other was the broad-shouldered stevedore who

had spoken to Frayne in the *cantina*.

"When one lives in Puerto Serrano in these days, *señor*," the stevedore was saying, "one lives at the gates of hell. A friend disappears—and none dares to ask what has become of him. Two men whisper on a corner—and the next day one is gone, never to be heard of more. They say the dungeons of San Silvestre are full." He spread his hands. "Uriarte's spies are everywhere. Even here, perhaps."

"These things," said Philip Frayne, in Spanish that was the exact patois of the Serranisto soldier he seemed to be, "are not the doing of Don Carlos Aranaga. I know that old gentleman well. He is the true *caballero*. He would not harm his people."

"It is what all men say. He is beloved in this land—or was," the stevedore answered. "But now his reckless acts are bringing the marines again. It means machine guns, and shells and death. It is not well, *señor*. Serrano has not deserved such a fate."

"If only I could win speech—a single half-hour—with Don Carlos!" Frayne breathed. "You have made sure he has not left the country?"

"Not on any vessel which has sailed from this port since his last public appearance," the stevedore answered. "I have checked and cross-checked. I cannot be mistaken."

Frayne nodded. "You have done very well, Manuel. You and my other friends, who remembered days gone by when, as now, we worked together—not only for my country, but for yours. Manuel, the United States means Serrano well. What dark influence it is that seeks to stir up enmity and bloodshed, I do not know—yet—but when I see Don Carlos, I think I will know. Find him for me, Manuel. So shall you serve the land you love."

The stevedore's heavy face lighted. "I will do my best, *señor!*" He was a true patriot.

When he had left, Frayne began nervously pacing the candle-lit room. All of his agents had reported save one—Esteban. It was for Esteban he waited.

They were faithful friends, these agents of his. They had worked with Frayne before, and he trusted them with his life now without hesitation. If he were caught here, in this uniform—he shrugged. He had taken worse risks. He would take far worse this very night, if Esteban would only come.

Esteban was a young fellow who had joined the army since Frayne had seen him last. He was a cousin of the stevedore, Manuel. It was upon Esteban that Frayne depended to obtain the countersign for the night. Thereafter he meant to enter the Fortress San Silvestre to make a closer inspection of the two towers, the more southerly of which was called El Torre Blanco. It was

beneath El Torre Blanco that the dungeons lay.

The door opened suddenly. Frayne started forward, a smile of greeting on his lips. But the faint glow of the guttering candle on the table illumined not the face of young Esteban, but the haggard features of Manuel, the stevedore. His forehead was beaded with sweat; his eyes seemed to protrude.

"What has happened?" asked Frayne quietly.

"Esteban! They shot him—in San Silvestre." The words came in little gasps.

"They knew then?"

"No." Manuel dropped into a chair, forced himself to be calm. "But he tried inquiries on his own behalf thinking thus to serve the *señor* better. He spoke to a comrade of the dungeons beneath the Torre Blanco. He was overheard."

Frayne shook his head wearily. Such things were the curse of Intelligence work—the efficient agent who tries to be overefficient goes beyond his orders and gets caught.

"He knew we were searching for some one," Manuel went on, "and so he thought an inspection of the dungeons might help. As he crossed the courtyard tonight, he was shot down by a rifleman on the wall. His comrade has just sent me word."

Frayne nodded. It was all in the game. One took one's chances. His own turn might come next.

"Esteban's family will be compensated," he said steadily. "Now I must go."

"You are not attempting—" Dread choked Manuel.

"Yes. The work must be done." Frayne was already at the door.

*"Vaya con Diós, señor!"* muttered Manuel as the door swung shut. *"Carramba!* But he is of the cold blood, that one."

In front of the Fortress San Silvestre, on the landward side, was a small plaza, lighted only by the one feeble streetlamp and the sputtering arc light over the fortress gate.

Across the plaza strolled unconcernedly a young man in the uniform of a sergeant of the Regiment Miranda, pistol flapping on one hip, haversack on the other. From the corner of his eye, he noted the vigilance of the gate-guard, and saw how each person who entered was stopped and made to give the countersign.

A searchlight raked along the sea wall of the fortress, outlining tower and battlement in its eerie glare. The cruiser was also vigilant, a gray embodiment of death and destruction. Frayne's mind clicked faster over the possibility of getting the password to the dungeon. He watched the gate-guard, then smiled.

He knew the ways of these easy-going little soldiers. They were not all so vigilant.

Turning down a side street, he

came presently on the inevitable sentry before the door of a dignitary's house. The man leaned against the wall half asleep. Frayne crept up behind him, on silent feet. He had snatched the man's rifle from his grip and was shaking him furiously by the shoulders before the sentry realized that anyone was near.

"Sleeping on post, *perro!*" snarled Frayne. "You shall face a firing squad for this! Suppose the *Americanos* came?"

The stricken sentry began to tremble. His face was a pale, frightened blur in the gloom, from which piteous bleatings came.

"Have pity, *sargento!* I but dozed a little. For the love of God, do not report me!"

"Bah! You're drunk," accused Frayne, catching the odor of raw native rum on the fellow's breath. "What use is a drunken sentry? You shall be made an example."

"No! Mercy, *sargento!*"

"I take no risks with such swine," Frayne grated. "Why, I'll wager your fuddled brain can't even remember the countersign."

"Ah, *si, si, mi sargento!*" cried the man eagerly. "It is 'Santa Ana.' *Mira*—do I not remember? Is that not right?"

"Well, let this be a lesson to you," grunted Frayne grudgingly, handing back the man's rifle. "Don't let me catch you sleeping again, understand?"

"Thank you, *mi sargento*. I will be very careful," the sentry promised, with quivering gratitude.

Frayne went on his way, suppressing a chuckle till he was safely round the next corner and headed for the little plaza again. Boldly, he walked up to the gate of the fortress.

A sentry's bayonet dropped to the charge. *"Alto! Quién viva?"*

"Santa Ana!" he answered carelessly, never pausing.

*"Paso!"* The sentry came to the order. The corporal of the guard barely glanced at Frayne. There were many new faces in the Serrano regiments these days.

Frayne drew a long breath. He was inside the Fortress San Silvestre—but he was still a long way from the dungeons of the Torre Blanco.

The courtyard was full of soldiers and policemen in uniforms, most of them lounging about as though waiting for some order. Before the iron door of the Torre Blanco, in the far corner of the yard, a watchfire burned, and two sentinels paced up and down.

There was no chance of getting in that way.

Frayne ascended the steps of the main keep. A servant, hurrying through the great doors bearing a bottle, stared at him curiously, but no one stopped him as he passed on into the entrance hall. Directly in front of him were the doors leading into the great *sala*. They were closed. A line of light showed

beneath. Frayne strolled toward them, intending to listen for sounds within.

He was within five paces when one of the doors suddenly opened and Uriarte stepped out.

FRAYNE had just time to step into the shadows.

Uriarte passed him, head down, deep in thought. He went to the great front doors, closed them and locked them. Then he crossed the hall to a closet and dragged out a trunk. An empty trunk, it appeared to be, from the ease with which he handled it.

He dragged the trunk into the great *sala,* and under cover of the noise, Frayne slipped to the door, which Uriarte had left partly open.

Uriarte was alone in the *sala.* He had opened the trunk and was looking into it. His face was alight, for a moment, with a mirth that was purely savage.

"Close quarters for a great man," he muttered. "But it will serve."

He walked over to a French window and looked out, parting the heavy curtains. Then he nodded, as if with satisfaction at what he saw. The nod became a jerk of furious surprise as he heard the soft click of the door Frayne had just closed behind him.

He whirled, grabbing for his holstered automatic, but he had no time to draw the weapon. His teeth clicked together as Frayne's fist lashed home to the point of his jaw. He crumpled to the floor.

Swiftly, efficiently, Frayne bound him with cords torn from the draperies. He rolled the unconscious man under a couch and stood erect, panting a little. The *sala's* doors had no bolt, but Frayne did not fear interruption. He knew that few people were allowed in this *sala* at night.

Then he, too, went to the French window and looked out. A motor car stood at the side portico, its chauffeur a dark and waiting figure inside it. After one swift glance around, Frayne walked over to a great tapestry on the south wall, slipped behind it and felt over the paneling of the wall behind with practiced fingers. The secrets of San Silvestre were no secrets to Frayne. He had not wasted his time on his previous visit to Serrano.

Where was the spring?

A puff of cold air touched his face. His hand had found the edge of the panel—opened it further. He stepped through. There was no going back now—even if death waited there in the damp darkness.

The passage sloped downward as he moved silently along, pausing occasionally to listen. He heard nothing save the scampering of rats, and the drip of fetid water from the roof and walls.

He came to a low door that was open. Moonlight filtered into the cell within, through a barred window, beyond which he heard the lap of waves against stone.

He passed on. The passage turned abruptly to the left. Frayne pushed his head cautiously around the corner, and saw, far along the stone-walled corridor, a lantern's faint gleam. That gleam came through a barred wicket in a door which closed the end of the passage. The passage itself was all darkness and silence.

Frayne moved cautiously round the corner. His fingers, feeling along the outer wall, came to another door. This one was not open —far from it. There were three great iron bars, each secured by a separate and ponderous padlock. The huge door lock had a keyhole for a key that must weigh a couple of pounds.

The long-dead Spaniards who had built this Castle of San Silvestre were men who believed in taking no chances with prisoners.

Frayne stooped and looked through the keyhole, but could see nothing save a faint gleam of moonlight. This dungeon, too, opened on the outer face of the tower.

He put his ear to the rusty iron, and heard the waves—then something else. His ear caught a murmuring, as of a voice in prayer. It was a feeble, quavering voice, yet one which held a hint of indomitable resolution, for all its feebleness.

"Ah, *Diós mio—padre de merced—*"

It was in truth, a prayer.

The voice struggled on. "Father of mercy, grant me only this. I must die. I do not ask for life. But grant that my death may, by Thy infinite wisdom, be of service to my people. Hear me. . . ."

The voice was the voice of Don Carlos Aranaga, President of Serrano.

Frayne knew that voice well. Often he had talked with the man who was known as "the good Don Carlos." Now he lay here in this dungeon, with the chill and the damp rotting his frail life away.

Chains clanked faintly within the door. Frayne moved his lips to the keyhole to speak some word of reassurance. The word was never spoken.

Suddenly, silently, he was borne to the floor beneath the savage assault of a man who had sprung upon him from behind. Years of Intelligence service had built up within Frayne reflexes which could not be taken by surprise, and even as he went down, he rolled sidewise, kicked back once—viciously —and twisted to his knees.

He felt a blade bite into the flesh of his thigh. Then his left hand struck, went home against a heaving chest, while his right was already ripping open his holster.

Then his enemy broke the silence with a roar. "The guard!" bawled his frantic voice. "To me! The guard!"

Frayne knew that voice, too. It was Morales' voice.

The door at the end of the cor-

ridor crashed open. Hobnailed boots clattered over the stone floor. Frayne had but one thought—to escape with the priceless knowledge he had won.

He kicked himself free of Morales' clutching hand, taking another knife-cut in the leg as he did so. Then he was running for his life. Up the sloping corridor he panted, warm blood streaming down his leg.

Behind him, the pursuit checked a moment as the guard reached Morales, then tore on. A pistol barked, and a bullet whined past, clipping the stone beside Frayne's head. At last his outstretched hand touched the panel.

He leaped through it into the *sala,* slammed the panel shut, and dashed for the French window. He knew now what the empty trunk was for—and the waiting car. He guessed what orders the chauffeur would have.

The window opened at his touch. He ran across the portico, down two steps and so to the car. Bounding in, he hurled orders at the chauffeur.

*"Vamos! Pronto!"* he shouted, in a tone of authority which brooked no argument.

Gears clashed as the man obeyed. The motor roared, and the car slid out of the shadows of the portico, heading across the courtyard for the open gate.

Only then did Frayne become aware of something hard which nudged him in the ribs; of a voice which purred in his ear, "Why so fast, my very excellent Commander Frayne?"

His head snapped round. In the far corner of the seat sat Uriarte, his rat's eyes aglow with triumph.

"You really should have gagged me, you know," murmured Uriarte, "with the chauffeur within call. Sit still!"

A pistol muzzle bored deep into Frayne's rib. He was neatly trapped.

"I thought you'd try this trick," Uriarte smiled, then raised his voice. "Around the drive and back into the portico, Juan. Don't go out of the gate. I think perhaps we shall be awaited in the *sala.*"

They were passing the gate. Frayne's hand was still on the handle of the car door. Uriarte had made his presence known as Frayne was in the act of closing it. If they got him back into the *sala,* there was no hope.

Into Frayne's mind popped a precept of his old chief, Admiral Garfield. "Where there is only one chance to win, take it—whatever the risk," the admiral had said to him many times.

He flung the door open and leaped out as the car slowed for the turn. Uriarte, startled, fired wildly, and missed.

Frayne dashed for the gate, yelling, "Turn out the guard! Prisoners escaping in that car!"

Behind him, Uriarte was fumbling at the car door, howling imprecations. The guard came swarming out—three noncommissioned officers shouting excited and contradictory orders.

Frayne, giving other commands as loudly as the rest, dashed past them, through the gate, and out into the plaza. Half a dozen rifleshots crackled from the gate. Bullets whined close as Uriarte finally made his presence felt. Frayne raced for the opening of a dark street across the plaza, losing time in zigzagging as he went.

Despair clutched at him as he saw the lights of the car lurch out of the gate. Soldiers clung to the running board. They would get him now. . . .

There was only one chance—the motor boat from the *Hartford* lying at the customhouse pier, but the pier was blocks away. Frayne dashed down the dark street toward it, just as a volley chipped the walls of the house at the corner. The car was coming across the plaza, cutting recklessly over the grass.

A second car, running without lights, came up the street at top speed. Frayne saw it, knew why it was there. He waved it on as it passed. There was no chance, for the lights of Uriarte's car were already at the far end of the street. They would surely see him now. He could not hope to reach the end of the block. Every house door seemed tightly closed, hemming him in. He was trapped. . . .

The light of the car suddenly caught his flying figure as he ran on. A shout of triumph rose—to be drowned in a terrific crash as the lightless car swung head-on into that of the pursuers. Screams of rage and agony rang in Frayne's ears as he dodged around the next corner into the Avenida Febrero. The customhouse pier lay at the foot of that thoroughfare, he knew.

He signaled a taxi, and jumped in. As he settled back on the seat, his hand rose to his visor in salute to a gallant comrade.

Manuel, as previously arranged, had been at hand with the getaway car, cruising round the block, waiting. He had seen that there was no chance to turn, and he had done the next best thing—crashed straight into the pursuing auto. It would mean death for Manuel, either in the wreck, or at the hands of the infuriated Morales. Manuel had known that, yet had not hesitated.

"We take our chances in this business. . . ."

Five minutes later, Frayne stepped into the stern-sheets of the *Hartford's* boat, and heard her coxswain's welcome order, "Shove off!"

In the admiral's cabin of the cruiser, three men sat about a green-draped table. They were Admiral Manning, bluff of manner and seamed of face; the American min-

ister to Serrano, nervous and fidgety; and Frayne, whose calm exterior hid the rising tide of anger within.

The wounds on his leg had been superficial. They were bandaged and dressed now, and though they were painful, they were as nothing to his agony of spirit.

"Voices—voices in the darkness. That's all you have to go on, Commander Frayne," the minister summed up.

"I'm absolutely certain," Frayne replied. "I'll stake my reputation on it."

"All very well," rumbled the admiral, "but I won't stake mine."

"I believe in Morales. He's a man of education, of culture," the minister insisted. "He's not one of your murdering cutthroats like Zelaya. Continued coöperation with him is our proper policy—even if it means landing the marines."

Frayne leaned forward, holding himself in leash. "Can't you see, gentlemen," he reasoned, "how Morales is playing the game? The anti-American acts which have brought us all here have unquestionably been his work, but they have been done in Don Carlos' name. Before the world, Don Carlos bears the responsibility. If we can obtain no satisfaction from Don Carlos, we will be compelled to use force. Then, for the bloodshed that follows, Don Carlos will become a traitor in the eyes of his own people. After we withdraw, Morales is left in power. Don Carlos will never be heard of again. Gentlemen, are you going to stand by and let this scheming rascal make a catspaw of the United States of America?"

The admiral flushed brick-red, but the minister only made a weary gesture.

"We've been over all that, commander," he said. "Your evidence may be convincing to you, but to me it is just a collection of surmises colored by imagination. I know Morales. It is my considered opinion that we can do no better than to secure his succession to the presidency of Serrano."

Frayne rose to his feet. He thought of his letter of authority, but he thought also of his orders: "Don't use that authority unless you have to." There was another way.

"Suppose I can bring you unimpeachable proof, sir," he said, speaking directly to the minister, "that Don Carlos Aranaga is actually confined in a dungeon of the Torre Blanco? Proof that even you cannot question?"

"That," the minister admitted, "will be quite a different matter. But the proof must be complete. Complete," he repeated, as though liking the finality of the word. He glanced at the admiral with a faint lifting of eyebrows.

"It will be," promised Frayne.

The whaleboat's crew lay to on their muffled oars, a hundred yards from the sea wall of the Torre

Blanco. It was the hour of darkest darkness, just before the swift-coming tropic dawn.

"Is this close enough, sir?" whispered the young ensign in charge.

"Plenty," answered Frayne. "Any closer, and you might be seen or heard by a sentry on the wall. Keep her here, against the pull of the tide. Use your oars as little as possible."

"Good luck, sir," the ensign muttered, a trifle awed.

Frayne slipped over the stern of the boat, and with silent strokes swam steadily for the shore. About his neck was strapped a water-tight case containing a small but very efficient camera, and a flashlight.

It was not long before he felt the sloping rubble of the foundations under his feet. Above him, an overhanging turret jutted out. He heard a sentry's clear call, *"Numero cinco —sere-e-e-e-no!"*

Number five—all serene. Frayne smiled briefly in the darkness at that naïve assumption.

Beneath the overhanging turret, he crept up to the wall. The stones cut through to his knees; the salt water stung his bandaged wounds. He crawled steadily along until he found a barred opening, set flush with the edge of the sloping foundation.

He listened. Within, all was silent. Frayne took out his flashlight, thrust an arm inside lest a gleam should attract attention from the wall, and flicked a quick inquiring ray about the cell within. It was empty, and the door was open.

He crawled on, to his right, and as he approached the next opening, he heard voices.

Morales' deep bass rumbled the last of a threat. ". . . fool, Aranaga! You can end all this by giving me your word of honor to indorse my acts publicly. You can't stand much more. Why throw your life away?"

A faint groan answered; then came Aranaga's voice, feeble but resolute. "I can endure," said Don Carlos Aranaga.

Morales' snarl was the snarl of an enraged animal. It was followed by the sound of a sharp blow and a stifled groan from Don Carlos. By this time, Frayne had reached the window of the cell.

Within, a lantern burned dimly. By its light, he could see the aged president, chained fast, as though crucified to the farther wall of the dungeon, arms outspread, head hanging on his breast. Beside him, like a dark fiend in the pit of hell, stood the shadowy bulk of Morales.

The blow sounded again. Morales was striking the emaciated old man with a leather paddle. It came to Frayne, as he looked upon that dreadful scene, that Morales had spoken the truth. Don Carlos could not stand much more of this.

Then, afterwards, the trunk waited. In Aranaga's *hacienda,* doubtless a fine set-up for a suicide verdict would be arranged. The papers would carry the story. Don

Carlos Aranaga, having brought such ills upon his country by his arrogance toward the United States, takes his own life rather than face the fury of his people—his people, to whom he had been almost a God.

Morales was forcing the issue. He did not know how much Frayne had discovered. He must hurry, now, to the pitiless end of the course he had planned for himself. The course of empire.

Frayne had intended to wait for dawn and then, as the first rays of the eastern sun shone directly through the window, to use his camera for that "complete proof" which the minister had demanded of Don Carlos' presence in the dungeon.

He had thought Morales would not dare attempt the removal of Don Carlos that night, fearing American spies might be watching. But now—suppose Don Carlos died under the torture. Morales would arrange his suicide plant right there in the fortress, in the presidential suite itself, perhaps. And there would be only Frayne's unsupported word for proof. That, he knew, was not enough.

If only dawn would come! But the darkness remained impenetrable, clinging about Frayne like a pall. If he only had a flash outfit. . . .

"Speak, you stubborn old fool!" growled Morales.

A groan, fainter than before, was the only answer. Frayne was unarmed. He could do nothing to help Aranaga, with nothing but a camera and a pocket torch. A wild chance occurred to him. It was just possible, that with light. . . .

Frayne backed cautiously away from that window of horror, and stood erect, pressing back against the wall. The turret jutted out fully four feet, high above his head. Cupping one hand under the lens of his pocket torch, so that the light should not gleam on the water, he pointed it at the distant lights of the cruiser and began a series of flashes.

If the sentry saw him, he was done for. It seemed an age before, at last, the blinker at the *Hartford's* masthead winked suddenly into staccato action.

Now Frayne worked the button of his little torch in a swift message. "Turn two searchlights on this spot and hold till you see me run for the water," his dots and dashes flickered. "Then turn all searchlights on wall to blind riflemen."

"Acknowledge," blinked the *Hartford.*

Frayne crawled back to the window—just in time to hear another blow, another still fainter groan, and yet another curse from Morales. The sands of Don Carlos' life were swiftly running out.

A long white sword of light leaped suddenly into the sky from

the *Hartford's* searchlight tower. Another joined it, sweeping across the dark heavens in great arcs. Then, like striking blades, the lights crept downward, and Frayne blinked as the darkness fell away.

The cell was suddenly lighted by a blue-white glare, blinding, dazzling.

*"Madre de Diós!"* screamed a fear-crazed Morales. Jerking out a dagger, he plunged it into the emaciated breast of Don Carlos—just as Frayne's camera shutter clicked, and clicked again.

Morales staggered back, staring at the window, shielding his eyes from the light while his features writhed with his awful fear. It was as though the eye of God had looked in upon his crimes. Don Carlos sagged in his chains, blood running down his tortured body. Blood dripped from the dagger which Morales still held—and again the inexorable camera clicked to record the tragic situation.

Shouts came from the wall above. A rifle spat from an adjoining turret; a bullet smacked against the stones at Frayne's feet and went whining off into space.

Frayne stuffed his camera into its case, pulled the case tight, stumbled down the slope for the water. A bullet whistled above his wet hair. Then the searchlights lifted, were joined by two others, raking the walltop and turrets with their blinding rays. In the shelter of the lower darkness, Frayne plunged into the sea and swam for the waiting boat.

When he reached the cruiser, he did not at once go to the cabin to report. He headed straight for the photographic section, and pulled the dazed ship's photographer from his hammock.

Beneath the red light of the darkroom, he waited with taut nerves, while the negatives were developed. When he had looked at them, he nodded with grim satisfaction, and gave strange orders to the photographer. Don Aranaga's agony lay revealed in harsh black and white.

A few moments later, the minister and the admiral were bending over four still-wet prints which Frayne laid before them.

"Is the proof complete, sir?" asked Frayne.

"Yes," growled the admiral.

"It is complete. But—" the minister looked troubled— "I think we ought to report the situation to Washington by radio and ask for orders. This is quite unprecedented."

Frayne had expected this. And he knew that even one day's delay would give Morales time to entrench himself in the presidential office of Serrano. Frayne turned away to hide the expression on his face, for in his eyes was the determination to act—without orders.

Through the narrow streets of Puerto Serrano, a man fled for his life. Every door was closed against

him. From the upper windows, men and women and even children rained missiles and maledictions upon him as he ran.

Behind him ravened a howling mob, brandishing rifles, machetes, knives, clubs. These were the men of the back country, who had traveled to the city all one day and night and the next day, grim, determined, bent on vengeance. They were the peons and miners and *vaqueros,* rough, rock-hard men who revered Don Carlos Aranaga almost as a patron saint.

Deserted by his soldiers, abandoned to his fate, Francisco Fernando Morales fled toward the docks, hoping to gain the American cruiser, the one sanctuary left him in all the city which only yesterday he had ruled with an iron hand.

He was hatless, coatless. His shirt and trousers hung in tattered ribbons about his laboring limbs. Blood streaked his face and neck and body as he staggered on—his fear-dazed mind still stunned by the swift descent of this ragged horde.

From the deck of the *Hartford,* a group of officers watched the grim finish of the race through field glasses. Beside them stood two civilians, the American minister and Elena Aranaga, who had sought refuge aboard the cruiser early that morning. The girl's eyes were tragic, but she watched the terrible scene with an unflinching gaze.

"This is terrible—terrible!" muttered the minister.

Morales had reached the end of the pier, but there were no boats there. A launch from the *Hartford,* ordered in by the admiral on a mission of rescue, was not yet halfway to the shore.

Morales looked at the dark, swirling water, shrank back, then turned at bay. He lifted high his bloody arms—and one scream came clearly to the ears of the officers on the *Hartford.*

Then the mob was upon him. Machetes swung high, flashed down—and came up again, no longer flashing. Morales went down under a score of struggling bodies. Men fought like wolves to get to their victim, to have a share in his destruction, in his gruesome death.

Frayne reached out and took the glass from Elena's grasp. For the avengers of blood were tearing what remained of Francisco Morales to pieces with their bare hands. I is not good for women to look upon such things.

"This is your doing, Philip," said Elena Aranaga softly. "It is well done."

Frayne nodded. "Better," said he, "than waiting for orders from Washington—and giving time for Morales to stage his murder as a suicide. But you had your share in it—you and your friends who rode all night and day with the prints through every village and province of Serrano."

Tears came at last to Elena.

"Don't weep for your father, Elena," Frayne begged. "He had his last wish—that his death might benefit his country. Morales is dead now, and your father's friends will come into power. There will be peace, peace with honor. The soul of Don Carlos will rest well."

"A dreadful death," the minister was muttering.

"Richly deserved. Glad the boat didn't get there," snapped the admiral. "But what happened? Who stirred up that mob?"

Frayne smiled. "Photographs are useful things," he said. "I showed you four prints; I had a hundred more made. The stout peons of Serrano may not be able to read, sir, but they can certainly understand photographs."

He moved off toward the wardrobe hatch. The urge for sleep was heavy in his tired body. He did not even see the eyes of Elena Aranaga upon him as he went. He could not look back, for tomorrow—duty would beckon again. . . .

## POLICE BOSS

In June, 1953, unarmed East Berlin workers stoned Soviet tanks, demanding the resignation of the General Wilhelm Zaisser who once told his men: "An officer of my security department who is not capable of whipping a prisoner to death if need be and doing it with his own hands, without a second thought, is of no use to my department."

Zaisser, a former lieutenant in the Kaiser's army, had found life difficult in the French occupied Ruhr in the years immediately after the war. Some of his unemployed fellow officers were ending up in the Free Corps or in the unsuccessful Ludendorf Putch (including an ambitious young man named Hermann Goering), but Zaisser found the call of the German Communists, under Radek, for a common front against the French "invader," immensely more appealing. Soon leading sabotage raids, he was eventually arrested by the German government, escaping to Russia where he was sent to the Military Academy.

On Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Zaisser was parachuted into Germany to organize a network of Soviet industrial espionage, Zaisser himself joining the Gestapo, advancing to be Assistant Police Chief. Transferred to Spain when the Civil War began, he first commanded a brigade of the Loyalist Army, as General "Gomez," finally serving as Chief of Staff of the International Brigades.

Upon Hitler's invasion of Russia, the trusted Zaisser was put in charge of the camps for the imprisoned Nazi officers, his job to convert them to the need for a German-Russian alliance to defeat France, England, and the United States. Much of the present East Germany military power is the result of those conversations between Zaisser and his guests.

Peace meant an East Germany under the heels of Zaisser's police. . . .

# the women wait

*by . . . Richard Hardwick*

The young woman sat on the very edge of the chair to Miss Abby's right at the end of the antique coffee table.

"Of course," she said, obviously not yet at her ease, "I only know a little about him, just a few things I've heard, really, but Burke Horton must have been a . . . well, a *legen*dary sort of person."

Miss Abby smiled wanly as she poured the tea. "It seems so strange that anyone would be interested in Burke after all these years. You say you are with the Sunday newspaper, Miss Martin?"

"Yes ma'am. The Sunday magazine supplement. This is one of my first assignments." She sat up a bit more erect in her chair. "My editor thought this might make a good human interest story, getting your views on Burke Horton. After all, you were . . . were . . ."

Miss Abby nodded. "Yes, Burke and I were to be married. I was to be Mrs. Burke Horton." She glanced up at the young reporter. "Lemon or cream, Miss Martin?"

"Cream, please."

As Miss Abby finished her preparations of the tea the young woman let her eyes wander over the high ceilinged room of the old

*What had this man been like who'd died so long ago, and who'd meant so much to this woman and to still others, over the long years. . . .*

house. It was like being suddenly taken back in time. The walls were dark and drab; everything to do with the room seemed to soak up darkness, and hold it, even though the afternoon sun streamed in through the west windows.

Outside, in the sun-splashed yard were bright flowers and carefully tended shrubs. And yet, even with the flowers and sunlight the whole place exuded a feeling of solitude and loneliness. A reflection of long and dreary days that had slowly and interminably accumulated into years.

"I'll be pleased to tell you what I can," Miss Abby said pleasantly. She passed the cup of tea down the low table and turned her attention to her young visitor.

Miss Abby's face, beneath the gray hair that was pulled back tightly into a chignon, showed a calmness that bordered on serenity. The eyes were those of a woman half her age, sparkling as she smiled and sipped her tea.

"I don't suppose anyone as unusual as Burke Horton ever ceases to be of interest to people," the young woman said. "I*ma*gine! All the things he did, all the places he saw!"

"Imagine," Miss Abby murmured absently.

"Ma'am?"

"Nothing, my dear." She leaned and picked up a framed picture from the table, holding it out to Miss Martin. "Here is a photograph of Burke, taken in France in Nineteen-eighteen."

The reporter took the picture. It was faded and yellowed with age. Still, even in the outmoded garb of a World War I flyer, there was a striking handsomeness apparent in the young man who stood cockily beside the propeller of the ancient airplane.

"*Oh,* he was dreamy—" Her cheeks suddenly flushed. "I mean—"

"You're perfectly right, my dear. Burke was—dreamy." Miss Abby picked up her cup, smiling at the aptness of the word. If only the young woman from the newspaper knew how precisely she had hit upon Burke Horton . . .

Like many another girl in Brunswick, Abby Ricks had become completely infatuated with Burke Horton that cold drizzly day the train pulled into the station amid a great hissing of steam and belching of black smoke. When the band struck up with *Glory to Old Georgia* and Burke Horton stepped out onto the platform of the observation car in his high-collared uniform, Abby felt a sudden thrill go through her.

She was eighteen years old at the time and a sophomore at the university. Her father, an alumnus of the university himself, had taken her down to the station to welcome home from the war the greatest ex-football player in the nation. Seeing

him there on the platform, tall, straight, broad-shouldered, his handsome face shining with excitement, yet full of confidence, her young heart went out to him.

Burke Horton had been twenty-two the year he graduated from the university. If he was aware of a young high school girl named Abby Ricks, it would only have been because she was the daughter of Mr. George T. Ricks, president of the Brunswick National Bank. Burke Horton had come from a poor family and had gone through the university on athletic scholarships and aid from various alumni who saw in him the football potential that was realized. The alumnus who led these efforts was George T. Ricks.

"More tea, my dear?" Miss Abby reached for the young woman's empty cup.

"Thank you, I believe I will."

Miss Abby prepared the tea then picked up a large picture album that lay on the floor at the side of her chair. "Here are some more pictures of Burke. See, here is one showing him when he went to work in father's bank. Wasn't he a fine figure of a man in his business suit?"

"He went to work in your father's bank?" said the young woman. "But I thought . . ."

"You thought that he went to Alaska for gold? He did, Miss Martin, very shortly after this picture was taken." She looked away from the picture, her eyes straying blankly across the wall of the room. "I don't think Burke was ready to settle down just then. I think he had—what is it they call it? Wild oats to sow."

Miss Martin laid the album aside. "When did he propose to you, Miss Ricks?"

"When did he ask me to marry him?" There was a touch of pride in Miss Abby's voice as she said it. "It was about that same time, my dear. During those exciting few weeks between the time Burke arrived home and the day he went away again . . ."

Abby's father had brought Burke Horton to the house for supper the second night after Horton's arrival in Brunswick. They had dined and the two men had talked of the war and football. But the most important thing was that before he left, Burke Horton asked Abby if he might call on her the following night. He said there was a play in town and he had two tickets.

"I'd be happy to go with you, Mr. Horton," Abby said.

"Burke. It's Burke . . . Abby."

She blushed. "All right . . . Burke."

It was wonderful being seen out with him. All the other girls, the ones she knew and the ones she did not know, were jealous. She could see it plainly in their faces as she and the great Burke Horton

walked down Main Street.

Burke called for her every night for almost two weeks, and then he asked her to marry him.

Abby was taken by surprise. "I—I don't know, Burke."

"You love me, don't you?"

"I—I think I do," Abby told him. "Yes, I do love you."

"Then let's get married."

"Just like that? Just . . . get *married?"*

He smiled, spread his hands. "Why not?"

She was flustered now. "I'm only eighteen," she said.

"We can get your parents' permission."

He seemed so much older to her. He was twenty-six or seven, at least.

"I'd like to have a little time, Burke. To think. To talk to my parents."

"Let me speak to your father first. He's offered me a position in the bank. I start work tomorrow. I'd rather that I ask him before you do."

"All right," Abby said, feeling a strange lightness inside her. It had happened so quickly, so unexpectedly. She could still not be certain she were not dreaming.

The following evening when Burke called for her, Abby could hardly contain herself. "Father didn't mention it to me at dinner!" she said. "Did you talk to him? What did he say?"

Burke rubbed a finger across his lips. "I—I talked to him, Abby." He looked up quickly. "But not about us. Something came up."

She looked at him strangely. "Something came up? What came up?"

"An old Army buddy!" He was excited now, talking of something that held great interest for him. "A fellow I knew in France. We flew together! It's a—well, we're going to Alaska!"

"A*las*ka . . ."

He took hold of her shoulders. *"Gold!* Gold, Abby! I'll come back to you a wealthy man! You'll wait for me, won't you? Promise me you'll wait for me, Abby!"

"But . . . but . . ."

"I'll only be gone a year or two. Three at the very outside! Will you promise me, Abby?"

She suddenly felt a dizziness sweep over her, and only Burke Horton's grip on her shoulders kept her from falling. "Will I wait . . . ? I suppose so, Burke. If that's all there is to do. But why can't I go with you?"

He shook his head vehemently. "No, Abby, it would be too rough for you. It's better this way."

"A year or two?" she said. "Maybe—maybe *three?"* At eighteen three years was a small eternity.

"It'll fly past, and when I get back I'll be able to give you the very best of everything!"

Miss Martin, the reporter, sipped

her tea and frowned over the cup. "Then you waited three years, Miss Ricks?"

"I waited seven, my dear. Almost eight."

"Eight years! But when he came back you must have . . . well, you never married him."

"Burke did not make the fortune he had anticipated in Alaska. That was what took him so long, searching, always searching, and finally he came home. Once again my father offered him a job in the bank and Burke accepted it and began work. I thought that now we would be married."

"But you weren't."

Miss Abby shook her head. "But we weren't."

The young woman was completely engrossed, leaning forward in her chair. "What happened?"

"Oil," said Miss Abby. "Oil in Arabia."

"And he was gone . . ."

"Another eight years," said Miss Abby. "It seems that he went from there to Spain for a while. The Civil War, you know. Burke was a flier. He came back to Brunswick in Nineteen-thirty-four." Miss Abby sipped her tea and smiled at Miss Martin. "There was a small group of people at the railway station this time when Burke came home, though nothing like the crowd that first time." She tilted her head and frowned a little. "You know, I think Burke was disappointed."

"But you were still engaged, weren't you?" asked the reporter.

"Oh, yes. We were engaged. But Burke told me he had nothing to offer me, that he had not met with success and could not ask me to marry him until he could offer me some material comfort."

"And so he went—"

"—to the Transvaal," Abby nodded. "That's in Africa. This time Burke was searching for diamonds."

"And how many years was it this time?"

"Six. Eight and eight and six. Twenty-two years. And then Burke came home for the last time . . ."

It was a day very like the first one, the day Burke Horton stepped out onto the observation platform, triumphant, basking in the noisy adulation. Except this time, as Abby stood beneath the long platform shed and watched the train come chugging and puffing into the station through the misty afternoon, there were no crowds, no band playing. There were only a few people waiting for some friend or relative who was arriving.

Scarcely half a dozen people got off. Abby recognized young Arthur Ogden, coming home from his first semester at the university. There were two men who had the look of salesmen, and a woman whom Abby did not recognize.

Then she saw him, and as she did the individual days suddenly

swelled into the years, the long, long years of waiting, the life that had gone irretrievably past.

He wore a rumpled, baggy tweed suit, and when he caught sight of her he hurried toward her, limping slightly, a single piece of luggage hanging from his right hand.

"Abby!" he said.

"Hello, Burke."

He put the travel-worn suitcase down on the concrete platform. "Not quite like the first time, is it." It was a statement, not a question. He reached out and took her hands, then let his eyes rove around the nearly deserted platform.

Looking at him, Abby could hardly believe this man *was* Burke Horton. Of course he was, but he looked so old, so incredibly old, though he was only in the neighborhood of fifty. His successes—and his failures—had each taken its toll. Naturally, she had not expected to see the young hero of old come bouncing off the coach, but neither had she expected this. His face was sallow and waxen, his hair thin. The eyes were sunk deeply in their sockets and the cheeks were drawn, the nose pinched. The once broad shoulders had hunched forward, giving the impression of an aging bird holding its wings folded against the wind.

He turned back to her and smiled. "No, it's not the way it was the first time, Abby." The collar of his shirt was frayed and a button on his coat hung loosely, ready to fall. "But it doesn't matter." His hands squeezed hers. "What matters is that I'm back, that I've come back to you at last."

Abby Ricks took a deep breath of the sooty, damp air, and sighed a sigh that had been pentup for more than twenty-two years. "Yes, Burke, you're back. And that's what matters."

The afternoon had grown late. Shadows stretched long across the dark carpetting of the old house, deepening the gloom. Outside the windows in the garden a cricket droned lazily.

"It happened that first night," Abby Ricks continued. "Burke said that he would take a room at the hotel and that we would make arrangements for the wedding as soon as possible, perhaps that very week. Everything seemed set." She turned her eyes away from the young woman. "The next morning a small boy found the car I had loaned him in an alley a few blocks from here. Burke was sitting behind the wheel, dead, the gun still in his hand."

The young reporter touched a handkerchief to her eye. "Maybe—maybe it was better for you that he did what he did, Miss Ricks," she said suddenly. "I mean—maybe it was better that way, knowing he had nothing to offer you, that he had come back a broken man, a failure, realizing that in the eyes of the town you had waited all this time for him . . ."

"Twenty-two years," Abby said softly, staring into the darkest corner of the room.

"He must have convinced himself you'd be better off without him." She slowly took up the picture again and looked at the faded likeness of the handsome young man standing beside an antique airplane. "But—but somehow you just don't think of a man like that as the sort who would take his own life, no matter what the circumstances might be."

Abby lifted her cup, in which the tea had long since grown cold. Something flickered for an instant in her eyes, like small bright fires, as if she had suddenly recalled some long forgotten joke and were trying to hold back a giggle. "My dear," she said, "I often find it absolutely impossible to believe Burke *could* have done it at all. . . ."

## PROTEST....

THE WAR IN EUROPE seemed far away in Shanghai in the Spring of 1941. You could still buy everything you wanted in the stores, and drink anything you wanted in the glittering bars and nightclubs for which Shanghai was famous, beautiful gay young White Russians or others helping you to relax as you forgot—for a while—your troubles.

The attractive young Princess Arimah, seen at the "Blue Danube" most evenings, despised the Germans. She said so often, her eyes sparkling with delight as she'd think up new witticisms at the expense of the Master Race.

The entry of Japan and the United States into the war changed the picture, however, and the Princess and others were no longer as useful to the German Secret Service as before. The fortunes of the Princess soon declined. She often lived free in the New Asia Hotel, headquarters of the Japanese Secret Service, and sometimes they would let her earn a little money, questioning people suspected of divided loyalties for instance, but not enough for her to get out of the hole she found herself in. She no longer frequented the better bars; she'd be found in the smaller places, the ones the German sailors went to.

One day, in May of '43, acting on information received, Japanese warships, prowling off Formosa, were keeping a lookout for a submarine flying the German flag. Minutes after the sighting it was shelled and boarded, only for the boarders to be met by a high Japanese navy officer who showered them with abuse.

Obviously all concerned had made a slight mistake. Including the Princess, who'd told the Japanese Secret Service that this was an American submarine. When the Japanese, understandably annoyed, began to look for the young lady, she had disappeared. She had apparently taken this drastic way of objecting to the low Japanese pay. . . .

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# what's new in crime

*by . . . Hans Stefan Santesson*

As I've had occasion to write in the past, there is a temptation to remember, with nostalgia, those blessed and bygone days when novels in this field were not, as they are so often today, quasi-literate essays in the pathology of the abnormal, with emphasis on clinically described sex-cum-sadism urges. This latter school of writing, which often appears to cater to adult writers-on-walls, is excused by some on the grounds that this is "realism," and by still others on the grounds that society is admittedly "sick" and that there is no point in fighting this trend.

Nonsense!

The fact that novels of protest and still other novels born out of genuine revulsion and reaction to the blood and filth of war, were a part of the literary pattern of the early twenties and of the late forties, does not excuse and does not condone these little imitators of the kick-'er-in-the-navel school!

The Detective Novel—the Mystery Novel—should not be confused with these literary exercises whose sole *raison d'etre* seem to be to supplement the tabloids' role as the soother of this generation's

*Mr. Santesson, editor of this magazine during 1956-'60 and former editor, between 1945 and 1952, of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, resumes his column of comments on current mystery and suspense novels which, in their variety, illustrate his frequent insistence that it is impossible to generalize about the genre.*

frustrations! The pity of it is that the existence of this somewhat more elemental school of writing obscures the existence of mysteries and of detective novels which are genuinely distinguished novels, portraits of our times which can and will be read and read again long after littler men are forgotten, studied as much for the clarity of their prose as for their picture of our sometimes weird and sometimes wonderful times.

The impulse to murder—the impulse to violence, for that matter—would appear to be, if we believe some, a byproduct of the Industrial Revolution. There is a curious reluctance to recognize the reality that this is nothing new in the history of Mankind—and that intrigue and violence and deceit and treachery and mob rule and corruption were as much a part of the life of ancient Egypt or of Sumer as they are of these more enlightened times. Standards change. Mores change. But human nature, in all its complexity, does not really change. . . .

As we see in Theodore Mathieson's novel, THE DEVIL AND BEN FRANKLIN (Simon and Schuster, $3.50), in which Ben Franklin finds himself fighting both the Devil and superstition in his efforts to clear himself of charges that he has brought disaster to a Philadelphia for which, the year being 1734, the Salem witch-craft trials are very much a reality. How does Ben Franklin go about this job of detection in a society which we are tempted to dismiss as so much simpler and less sophisticated than ours appears to be, since we seldom read our papers too carefully? Read Mathieson's extremely interesting novel—soundly researched, incidentally—and discover how frighteningly familiar our yesterdays really are!

And then turn to David Alexander's latest Marty Land novel, BLOODSTAIN (Lippincott, $2.95), where the Broadway lawyer goes down South to solve a murder with clues that go back to the Civil War. Land accepts an assignment from the League for Legal Rights (the ACLU?) to defend a young Hungarian refugee who has been accused the leader of the local "Night Riders," a situation tailor-made for tension and bitterness in an area where the Civil War (as so few Northerners seem to understand) *is* a living memory and not only a chapter in the history books. . . . The handling of the characters is capable—the handling of the tension as the rednecks move, implacable in their hostility to ways of thinking which they cannot understand, is sound reporting in these times when it is all too easy to ignore the motivation for acts with which we, as individuals, may not be in agreement. Interesting. Do read this!

Spencer Dean's novels about Amblett's Protection Chief, Don Cadee, are always effective in their portrayal of special problems and procedures with which most of us are not familiar. We tend to ignore the reality that huge department stores, such as Amblett's, are after all almost isolated communities which, of a necessity, must take certain steps by themselves. There is no denying the need for men such as Cadee to cope with the daily problems faced by such businesses. In CREDIT FOR A MURDER (Doubleday, $2.95) a former Assistant Buyer is found dead, and a shoplifter, caught the same day, has the dead man's cigarette lighter? A coincidence? Cadee doubts this, particularly as he begins to establish the connection between the dead man and what is obviously an extremely talented and ruthless gang which has plans for Amblett's, with which the dead man had been involved.

Paul Somers' THE BROKEN JIGSAW (Harper's, $3.50) introduces two elements noticeably lacking in the earlier discussed offerings—a natural honey-blonde, satisfyingly amoral—and an unusual background against which she may be seen.

Mr. John W. Vandercook is quoted as saying that "Mr. Somers has the most essential of all talents in his genre—pace," and I would be guilty of disrespect to a writer whom I have always enjoyed if I disagreed with this reaction—and I suppose I don't really do so. I must confess though that I did not feel that this, and the author's knowledge of the background against which much of the action takes place, all added "delightfully to the shivers." . . .

What shivers?

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(*Continued from Page* 29)

Our other contributors? August Derleth—Sax Rohmer—Avram Davidson and George Fielding Eliot—should need no introduction to any familiar with this field. Edward D. Hoch, possibly better known to some for his Simon Ark novelets, turns to an interesting period in this country's history with the present story—the first in a series—about a man who is thought to be the legendary Billy the Kid. And Lt. Comdr. A. N. Glennon brings us in SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE—also the first of a series—what I believe to be a rarity in these days, a new type of detective!

We have, as Leslie Charteris point out in his Introduction, all sorts of things planned for you in the months to come! Subscribe today, then, to make sure of these forthcoming issues!

And let us hear from you what you think of the *new* Saint!

Happy reading!

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON

# the valley of arrows

*by . . . Edward D. Hoch*

Ben Snow wiped the sweat from his forehead and hunched over his saddle, gazing down into the peaceful valley before him. In another year, another age, this might have been farmland, or a sea of grazing grass for the great herds to the east. It might have marked the birthplace of a town or an empire. But right now there was only the fort, pale in the morning light, seemingly asleep.

Fort Arrowhead was a handsome place from up there, stretching across the valley like some great wooden throne. The men who manned it were mere ants, moving in and out of the gates, carrying on their various functions in a world all their own.

Ben sighed and turned his horse down the narrow grassy trail into the valley. This was the place he sought, a tiny dot on all but the newest maps. A city in the making, perhaps, or possibly just a last outpost against the redman. Fort Arrowhead.

They had seen him coming from a great distance, and a dozen rifles glinted in the morning sun, following the slow movements of his horse. He didn't blame them for

*Edward D. Hoch, while better known for his stories about the ageless Simon Ark (see* Sword for a Sinner *in the October 1959* Saint*) is also a student of American history and of the stories and legends from the Frontier Days, reflecting the tempo of the times.*

their caution. At that distance he could have been an Indian as easily as a white man. When he'd ridden a bit closer he saw some of the rifles disappear from the top of the wooden wall. An officer and two soldiers appeared at the gate, motioning him to stop.

"Pause and state your business," the officer commanded.

Ben brought the horse up short, keeping the smile on his face. "Ben Snow's the name. I'm here to see your commanding officer."

"What about?" the officer asked suspiciously.

"Indians," Ben answered simply.

"Dismount and lead your horse." Ben obeyed and followed the man inside the compound, across an area of stained and dusty grass that told him Fort Arrowhead had not been too long in this location—not long enough to wear the grass from underfoot, at least. The people, most of those who clustered around for a look at this new arrival, were soldiers—though he was surprised at the number of women at the fort. The distant cries of children told him that whole families apparently made it their home. Hazardous as it was, perhaps there was more safety here than out among the dark hills where any rock or bush could hide a savage with a flaming arrow.

Presently the officer paused before a long wooden cabin with a flag rippling gently before it. "Wait here," he said, and motioned to the two soldiers to make certain Ben did just that. He entered the building and spoke a few words to some unseen person, then returned to the door and motioned Ben inside.

The commanding officer of Fort Arrowhead was Colonel Noakes, a tall rangy man with a white mustache that reminded Ben of Custer. He spoke only occasionally, preferring a monosyllabic reply to the longer messages of other men. Ben had heard of him, because army men like Colonel Noakes brought a legend with them wherever they went. He'd fought in the Civil War a year after West Point, at Bull Run, and marched through the south with Sherman. He'd gone west in the Seventies, to fight Indians with the rest of the war-trained troops. He'd been promoted to captain under Custer, and had only missed the Little Big Horn because he'd been on leave, back in Chicago. After that he'd risen swiftly to major, and then to colonel, leading the great revenge raids that tore the Indian from his land and splattered the west with years of blood.

Colonel Noakes was a man the Indians hated. It could be said that he did not likewise hate them, but that detail did not change the situation at Fort Arrowhead. Whereas Noakes felt with all his heart that he was only doing a fighting man's duty to his country, the redmen who now ringed the valley

unseen had other ideas. To them, Noakes was another Custer—a man to be killed in the heat of battle, or knifed in the silence of sleep. Noakes was in command at Fort Arrowhead, and that was why this outpost had been picked for the attack both sides knew was only days or hours away.

"Colonel Noakes, my name is Ben Snow . . ."

He looked up, nodded. "Heard of you. Well?"

"Could I speak to you alone, sir?"

Noakes waved the other officer away and repeated, "Well?"

"Sir, I have come upon information that could be of vital importance to you . . ."

The colonel grunted. "What?"

"Someone at Fort Arrowhead is in league with the Indians."

Had he expected the statement to take Colonel Noakes by surprise, he'd have been disappointed. The tall man took the news without turning a hair. "Very interesting. Who?"

"That I don't know, sir, though it may very well be one of your officers. I picked up a trail yesterday, up in the hills, Two Indians had met with someone—someone who rode a shod horse. I followed the horse back to the fort. Since you have rigid security measures in force, it's my guess that only an officer could have gotten out alone."

Colonel Noakes cleared his throat. "Quite right. Thank you." His gaze returned to the papers on his desk, as if Ben had merely told him the time of day.

"But, sir . . ."

"That's all, Snow."

Ben turned and went outside. So the trip down into the valley had been for nothing. The man who sat behind the desk was not interested in betrayal by one of his officers. He looked up at the sky and cursed the dark gray clouds that warned of rain in the distant mountains.

"You all through?" a voice asked, and he saw the officer who'd admitted him.

"I guess so."

"You're Ben Snow, huh?"

"That's the name."

"Heard about you, from some people in Frontier. You're pretty fast with a gun."

"I rarely use it," Ben answered honestly. "I believe any dispute that can't be settled with fists shouldn't be settled with guns."

The officer merely smiled. "They say you killed two men back in Frontier. With your gun."

Ben frowned at the man, ignoring the last statement. "I didn't catch your name, Captain."

The officer bowed slightly. "Captain Roberts, sir, at your service."

"Glad to meet you, Captain. But I do think I should be getting along now, before the storm breaks."

"One moment, if you would be

so kind, Mr. Snow." He laid a hand on Ben's shoulder. "There's someone who wants to meet you."

"To meet me?" Ben followed him across the central yard to one of the houses on the far side. Could there be someone here from his past, from those years of wandering and doubt?

"In here," Captain Roberts said, holding open the door. It was obviously an officer's residence, belonging to Roberts or one of the others.

Ben walked in, adjusted his eyes to the dimness, and made out finally the shadowy figure of a young woman. He had only a second to dive to one side before she fired the revolver she held in her hand.

And she would have fired again had not Roberts leapt in at her, pinning her arms to her sides. "Anita, you crazy fool!" he shouted out. "You'll have the whole garrison down on us!"

Captain Roberts pulled the gun from her hand and rushed back outside to meet anyone the shot had attracted. Ben picked himself up from the floor and took a better look at the woman who'd just tried to kill him. She was about his age —perhaps thirty or thirty-one—with tired eyes that reflected too many years west of the Mississippi.

"To what do I owe the honor?" he asked quietly.

"I . . . You don't look like him . . ." Her expression was puzzled, unbelieving.

"Like who?"

"Billy the Kid," she answered quietly. "I heard he wasn't dead. I heard . . . that you were Billy the Kid, come back from the grave . . ."

Ben sighed and sat down. Everywhere it was the same. Everywhere the same story. "Do I look like Billy the Kid?" he asked her.

"No, not really. The . . . the face is the same, but you're taller, stronger."

"You knew him?"

She nodded, a slight jerky movement of her head that he barely caught. "Nine years ago, just before he died. In a little town in New Mexico . . ."

"And you thought it was me. You thought he was still alive."

The nod was firmer now. "They said he was alive. They said he was in Frontier, using the name of Ben Snow. And that's you."

"Which only goes to prove you can't believe everything you hear." He paused and studied her a bit more intently. "Are you Mrs. Roberts?"

"Yes," she answered. "Three years now. He's a good man but he doesn't understand me."

"Did Billy?"

The eyes flickered shut a moment. "Sometimes. That was a long time ago." Then the eyes came open. "What brings you to Fort Arrowhead, Mr. Snow?"

"A useless mission, I'm afraid. I stumbled upon some information I thought might be of interest to

your commanding officer. I was wrong."

The door behind him opened and Captain Roberts reappeared. His face was white and his voice trembling. "God, Anita—some savage has gotten in and killed Colonel Noakes . . ."

The effect of his words on Ben was not as startling as it might have been. The Navaho horsemen were waiting just beyond the hills, and it was not impossible that one of them had somehow penetrated the walls of Fort Arrowhead to kill the man they hated so much.

"How?" Ben asked, because it seemed a likely question.

"An arrow. Through his throat. The men outside never heard a thing. Major Schult just found him."

"Who's in charge now?"

Roberts thought a moment. "Why—Schult is second in command."

"I want to see him—right away." They hurried away, leaving Anita Roberts alone in the dim quarters that were her home. Outside, the distant playing of children could still be heard—but now Ben noticed another sound, or absence of sound. The headquarters building he'd left such a short time before was now a magnet of silent activity. A dozen uniformed officers were clustered around, their voices dulled as if in deference to the dead.

Major Schult was shorter than the others around him, and he conveyed the impression of a latter-day Napoleon. Now, with the mantle of leadership suddenly draped around his shoulders, he seemed calm and efficient, issuing orders with the same subdued tone that the others used.

"Major Schult? My name's Ben Snow. I'd like to speak to you, sir."

"Snow? Snow?" he repeated, seeming to search his memory for some past knowledge of the name. "Can't you see I'm busy, man?"

"I'm afraid it's about Colonel Noakes, sir. And the Navahos."

"Well . . . come in here." He led the way into the office, carefully looking away from the crumpled thing behind the desk. But Ben looked, and saw the body of Colonel Noakes, a Navaho arrow protruding from the left side of his neck. The arrow was slanted downward, as if it had been fired from above, and Ben's eyes went automatically to the ceiling of the little room. His gaze met only the brown beams of the solid wooden roof, without an opening in it.

"I spoke to the Colonel as soon as I arrived," Ben began when they were alone in the room with the dead man. "I told him I'd stumbled on hoofprints up the valley, showing that someone from the fort had met with two Navahoes. There was something funny — secret — about the whole look of it. I knew at once that this was no peace meeting or truce talk. Someone from this fort

—probably an officer since he was out alone—had met the Indians for a purpose I could only guess."

"You told the Colonel this?" Schult asked, a frown beginning to crawl across his wide forehead.

"I told him."

"You really believe this?"

"I believe there are a half-thousand Navaho braves waiting just beyond the hill. Perhaps they're waiting for a signal."

Major Schult thought about this a moment before replying. "You're aware of the situation here? You're aware that it's him they're after?" He motioned toward the body almost at their feet.

"I've heard stories," Ben admitted. "He was an old Indian-fighter."

"Ever fight Indians yourself?"

"I was with the army at Wounded Knee earlier this year."

Schult's face reflected a brief expression of disgust. "I mean fight them, not massacre them. Indians are human just like you and I. There are ways of dealing with them."

Ben's mouth twisted in a hint at a smile. "What deal would you suggest in the present circumstances?"

Major Schult thought about it for only a brief moment before replying. "You and I could ride out there and tell them the colonel is dead. It might stop the attack. We could even give up his body if necessary."

"Don't you think they know?"

He shook his head. "I'd stake my life that no redskin entered this compound. Something, someone else killed Colonel Noakes."

"And you think this would turn back those savages? You think we could get within a mile of them without being shot down?"

"I think they'd respect a flag of truce, Mr. Snow."

"Why me? Why do I get picked for the job?"

"Two reasons. It'll get you out of here safely, and it'll give me someone I can trust. If your story is true, any of my men might be the traitor."

Well, that was it, and Ben saw no way out of it for himself. He didn't trust the waiting Navaho, but it seemed at least as safe as remaining here at Arrowhead, in the company of an unknown traitor, a murdering savage, and a girl who had tried once to kill him. "All right," he decided. "When do we go?"

"Right now. They're certainly not going to sit out there beyond that hill all day . . ."

They rode out, into the valley, with Major Schult holding high a white guidon signalling their friendly intentions. For the first half-hour they saw not a living soul, and the conversation between them was limited to speculation about the great black clouds that still lurked near at hand.

Presently, though, Schult turned to Ben. "I see you're still wearing your gun. Perhaps you should remove it."

"I feel more comfortable with it on," Ben told him. "If you knew more about Indians you'd be wearing sidearms, too."

"Not with a truce flag. Guns poison the atmosphere."

"Yeah."

"Some folks say you look a bit like Billy the Kid used to," the major said casually.

Ben kept his eyes straight ahead. "Billy's been dead nine years. I can't help what stories get started. Talk to Captain Roberts' wife some time. She knew Billy quite well."

"Oh?"

"Anyway, there are the people we came to see," Ben said, motioning toward the rocky bluff ahead. A party of Navaho scouts, perhaps nine or ten of them, had appeared over the ridge. They stood simply watching, waiting, making no move to challenge or stop them.

"What now?" Major Schult asked.

"They'll have a leader somewhere," Ben said. "If they don't kill us they'll probably take us to him." And even as he spoke the Indians began riding down around them, forming a silent circle as if at the command of some unseen chieftain.

"They seem to have us," Schult said.

"At least we're still alive. You keep your hand on that white flag and I'll keep mine near my gun."

Presently the surrounding circle of Indians paused, and down a narrow gully rode a single Navaho warrior such as Ben had never seen before. The man was tall, over six feet, and his hair was pure white even in youth. He carried himself upon his horse like some Greek god and wore only a single feather in the band around his forehead. But the most amazing thing about him was that he carried not a weapon. Not even a knife hung by his side as he rode toward them.

"I am called Running Bear," he said, speaking with a voice almost, but not quite, educated. "These are my people."

"You are Navaho?" Major Schult asked.

The great head shook. "I am from the north. I have met your Colonel Noakes on the plain of battle before. He killed many braves."

"Colonel Noakes is dead," Ben told him, "slain not an hour ago by a Navaho arrow."

The eyes flickered, but no other expression crossed the face of Running Bear. "Are these words true?" he asked Schult.

"They are. We will surrender the body if it will assure safety to the people of the fort."

Running Bear's eyes flicked shut an instant, then opened. "No, a

single life will not avenge the death of my people. I was promised the lives of one hundred men."

"Promised?" Schult exploded. "Promised by whom?"

"I was promised," Running Bear repeated, and that was all he would say.

"What of the women and children?"

"If possible we will not harm them."

"You be damned," the major shouted. "We'll meet you at the gates with bullets and sabres."

The Indians tightened their circle around them, and Ben saw one fitting an arrow into his bow. Another held a rifle ready.

"Remember," Ben told Running Bear, "we come under a flag of truce."

The Indian nodded slowly. "You come, and you go. I hope you reach the fort in time. Go now, and be ready to meet us." His words carried a note of menace that made Ben's hair tingle. The circle opened for them and he spurred his horse around.

"Come on, Major. Let's get out of here. You can't reason with Indians."

But Schult held his ground. "Hand me your gun," he said. "I'll settle this war right now." He let the truce flag fall to the ground.

Ben could wait no longer. He slapped Schult's horse into motion and led the charge out of the circle of braves. Behind them, he heard Running Bear's voice raised in some ancient command.

An arrow bit the dirt a few feet ahead of Ben's galloping horse, and another whistled past his head. "We've had it now," he shouted back at Schult.

"Any day I can't outrun Navaho arrows!"

"What about bullets?"

"They won't chance the noise if they're riding to attack the fort. This way they can be into the valley before my men see them coming."

Ben drew his gun and twisted in the saddle, but there was no sure shoot open to him. The warriors of Running Bear were all around them, but well out of pistol range. He cursed himself for not bringing a rifle.

"Well, at least I can get off a few shots in the air," he said.

"Save them. We might need every one."

Their horses were sweating with the strain now, hooves pounding the dust. And around them Indians on horseback were swarming down into the valley, like the melting snows of spring. One warrior, his painted naked body glistening, drew up not a hundred feet away, raising his bow in silent challenge. Ben twisted in his saddle and shot the Indian dead.

"Where the hell did you learn to shoot like that?" Schult gasped out, beginning to fall a bit behind.

"When people think you're the

ghost of Billy the Kid, you've got to be able to shoot."

Ahead, perhaps two miles down in the valley, the guarding walls of Arrowhead rose suddenly into view. They might just make it, he thought. And then the sky was filled with a great tide of arrows, falling from either side like a summer cloudburst.

"Schult!"

Behind him the major's horse went down, sliding in the dirt. Schult staggered to his feet as a painted brave charged in on them. Ben wheeled his horse around and fired twice as the savage met Schult's body with a feathered spear. At that range he couldn't miss and the enemy's skull seemed to blow apart under the bullet's impact.

But the major had fallen now, bleeding from the side where the spear head had scraped and cut at flesh. "Come on," Ben shouted, pulling at him. Somehow they made it onto the single horse, riding on down the valley. And the arrows followed them down.

Schult, riding behind him, grunted once—and Ben knew an arrow had found its mark. "Hang on," he said. "Not much further now."

The doors of the fort were opening before them, and the bark of rifles was sending an answer to redskins' arrows. They'd made it, somehow.

Ben slid to the ground as Roberts and another captain came running over. They helped Schult out of the saddle, trying not to look at the blood and mess of his torn uniform. There was one arrow still in his back and Ben pulled it out, bringing a new gush of blood.

"He can't last," Captain Roberts said.

"Bandage him up," Ben said. "He's not dead yet. And who's next in command?"

"I guess I am," Roberts told him.

"Well, get up to that wall and feast your eyes on more damn Indians than you ever saw before. They're comin' like the wind and nothing's goin' to stop them."

Roberts looked briefly frightened. Then he ran off to issue orders to the men who would defend the fort. It was the women who took up the task of caring for the wounded major, and Ben saw Anita Roberts unrolling a clean bandage for him. It surprised him somehow, to see her out here in the daylight with the other women.

"Mrs. Roberts . . ."

She looked up at him. "I'm glad you're back."

Overhead, a single arrow cut the air and clattered harmlessly off a tin roof. "Everybody under cover," someone shouted. "Here they come."

Ben pulled her under cover as the air was suddenly torn with sound and fury. Two men hurried to carry the wounded major inside.

"Oh, God," Mrs. Roberts gasped at his side. "Will they kill us all?"

He didn't bother to answer. High on the wall a soldier toppled backwards in death. The arrows kept coming, and now there was rifle fire from the Indians too, as they began risking their small supply of ammunition.

"Your husband's in charge now," Ben said. "He'll hold them off."

"But that's just it," she gasped. "He won't. He likes them better than white men. He . . ."

Ben stared. Her words dug into his brain and he moved. Of course! Captain Roberts . . .

"Where are you going?"

"I'll be back," he shouted. "Stay under cover."

The arrows thudded into the ground around him as he ran, and he could see that some of the Indians had already gained the top of the wall, battling hand-to-hand with the defenders. But Ben kept going, bursting through the door of the post headquarters.

Captain Roberts was there, alone, sitting very still in the colonel's old chair.

"This is where I find you while your men die out there," Ben said.

"What is this, Snow? What are you doing here?"

"You're the one who betrayed the fort, Roberts. You rode out yesterday and met with Running Bear. When I followed your tracks here and told the colonel you had to kill him. That arrow was never fired from a Navaho bow. You used it as a dagger to stab him. That's why you rushed out after your wife tried to kill me. That's when you did it—in those few minutes before Schult found the body. You overheard what I told the colonel and tried to lure me to my death too. You knew Anita would try to kill me."

Captain Roberts rose from behind the desk. He was holding his service revolver pointed at Ben's chest. "It doesn't matter now what you know. Running Bear is knocking on the gates. The fort will be his within an hour."

"Why?" Ben asked him. "Why?"

"Because I like Indians. Because I hate every damned man in this outfit. Because just for once I want to play God."

"Put down the gun, Roberts."

"Oh, no. You won't talk me out of this. Nobody will."

The door behind Ben burst open and a sergeant rushed in. "Captain—they're massing for a final charge. What'll we do?"

"Do?" Roberts brought the gun around slightly to cover them both. "We'll surrender. Pass the word to surrender."

"But Captain . . ."

"That's an order, Sergeant. Surrender!"

Ben made a move toward his gun but the Captain's weapon was back on him at once. "No moves, Snow. This is my day."

And so they waited like that, while the Sergeant passed the order to surrender. Gradually the firing on the walls grew less, and then suddenly there was the terrible squeak of the great gates being thrown open. The fort was in the hands of Running Bear.

Roberts motioned Ben outside with his gun, and Ben saw the Navaho braves charging through the open gates with unrestrained shouts of victory. And in their midst rode the triumphant, fantastic figure of Running Bear, his white hair flowing behind him, unarmed yet somehow the strongest of them all.

"Greetings, Running Bear," Roberts shouted from the steps of the building. "I have delivered the fort into your hands as promised." There was an angry murmur from the men at this, but already the forces of Running Bear were in control. Arrows and rifles covered every man and woman.

At a motion from the Navaho chief, a warrior took up his position directly behind Ben, his bow bent and ready. "Now," Running Bear said. "A single movement and you die. An arrow can be quite effective at a range of six inches."

"It can be quite effective at any range," Ben agreed. "But I don't think you want to kill me."

Running Bear moved his horse a bit closer. "No? All adult white men here will die. You among them."

"I will fight you for their lives," Ben said. "Just you and I. If I win, everyone lives." It was a dangerous move, but he figured a fifty-fifty chance with knives and better than that with guns."

But Running Bear shook his head. "I carry no arms. I fight no man."

"You just watch while your men do the torturing and killing, huh?"

"No torture. The deaths will be swift and as painless as possible. I am not a savage, not entirely."

"If you won't fight me, let me fight your friend Roberts here," Ben said.

But the officer took a backward step. "No; Don't listen to him, Running Bear. Kill him!"

"Yes," Running Bear agreed suddenly, and motioned to the warrior who stood behind Ben.

This is it, Ben thought, tensing his back for the bite of the arrow. But instead there came the crack of a pistol, and the Indian toppled, his arrow zinging into the ground.

They turned as one man and saw Anita Roberts in the window of one of the buildings, gripping her pistol with both hands. And Ben supposed there was something right and just about her saving his life after trying to kill him.

But already a Navaho brave was raising his rifle to the window where Anita stood. Ben tensed for a leap across the ten feet separating them, but at the last second there came a scream from Roberts.

"No!" he shouted. "Not Anita!" And the army pistol he still held barked twice. The Indian dropped his rifle and toppled to the ground, but before his body hit five arrows thudded into Roberts' chest and back. He twisted, clawing at them, a look of amazement written across his face. Ben looked quickly away, because he did not want to see this man die.

The Indians brought Anita to her dead husband, and stood by quietly as she sobbed over him. Through it all Running Bear sat motionless on his horse, moving only to raise a hand of command against a brave who gestured with his knife toward Anita. "We have killed her husband," he spoke. "That is enough."

And so they stood there, Ben and Running Bear facing each other across the sobbing woman and the dead traitor, with two hundred soldiers and four hundred Indians waiting for the word, the command, that would mean death to so many.

"Now what?" Ben asked finally.

And Running Bear spoke. "Show me the body of Colonel Noakes," he said.

Ben led him inside, with two armed braves following, and in an inner room they found the colonel's body stretched out on the floor, covered with a blanket. "Here," Ben said softly. "Captain Roberts killed him."

And Running Bear bent and lifted the dead eyelids, and stared for a long time into those unseeing eyes. "Yes," he said finally. "Yes."

And then, with his long white hair trailing behind, he left. He mounted his great horse and spoke a few brief commands to the warriors. Then turned one last time toward Ben, standing on the steps. "We will meet again," he said, and it was not a threat but rather the words of one warrior to another.

Then they were gone, riding back through the gates of Fort Arrowhead like the very wind that rose in the west. And as they rode, a gentle rain began to fall from the gray clouds over the valley. And everywhere the soldiers of the fort began to pick up their weapons and care for their wounded.

And Ben Snow went with Anita to tend to Major Schult's torn body. And presently a burial detail took away the body of her husband to the graveyard outside the walls.

And there, in the rain, a great peace settled over the valley . . .

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**AGAIN AN EDITORIAL ASIDE**

This magazine has always been a market for new writers, and it will continue to be so. But I am afraid I cannot, at this time, consider any further unsolicited submissions. I must first finish going through such material as has been forwarded to me this winter and spring! I suspect that some material submitted to me, at one of this magazine's former addresses, may have gone astray. As to this I can only express my regret at this having happened, remind you that it is *always* advisable to keep a carbon of your story, and assure you that I will exercise every reasonable care to return such material as I *do* have. Above all, may I urge on all of you who submit to this and other magazines, PLEASE study your market!

# specialized knowledge

*by . . . A. N. Glennon*

THE AIR STOP on the door sighed as Tom Flynn stepped through, into the Naval Hospital. Across the darkened corridor, a Corpsman looked up from his desk in the Emergency Room.

"Something I can do for you, Commander?" he asked.

"Captain Castro of the city police asked me to meet him here. Know where I can find him?"

"Yes, sir; he's in here, behind the screen." The Corpsman pointed his pen over his shoulder, then bent again over his work log.

Walking silently in spite of his bulk, Tom took a few steps toward the portable screen, but stopped when Pete Castro came out from behind it, talking with the duty Medical Officer. On seeing Tom, Castro broke off his conversation and strode toward him.

"What's up, Pete?" asked Tom.

"Got a real problem here. I didn't call Shore Patrol headquarters; thought you'd want to handle this yourself. Fellow behind the screen was found about an hour ago, murdered."

"Who is he?"

"That's our problem. There's no identification except his uniform; he was wearing Chief Petty Offi-

*Lt. Comdr. A. N. Glennon is uniquely qualified to describe in the present story, the first of a series, the operational methods of what we believe to be a "new" kind of detective!*

cer's khakis. His wallet had been stripped, and there wasn't a thing in his pockets to tell us who he was."

"Did you check the inner pocket of his coat?"

"First thing. Even the manufacturer's labels had been ripped out."

"How about his cap? Usually there's a pocket for a name tag inside."

Pete shook his head. "Nothing. This job was thorough; even the rating badge and the hash marks were torn off the sleeve. The only things left on the uniform were the buttons and service ribbons; stuff likely to be on any uniform."

"Were there any cleaner's marks in the uniform?"

"None." Pete suddenly frowned. "That shouldn't be. It's not new; it must have been cleaned sometime."

"That doesn't mean too much nowadays, Pete, it was just a thought. A lot of cleaners put the marks on a slip of paper and staple it to the clothes. You might find something under ultraviolet light when you get a chance, but I don't suppose you want to sit around while the lab work is being done." Castro shook his head.

Tom ran a hand through his crew cut, scowling as a sudden thought struck him. "You didn't call me out here thinking I'd identify him for you, did you," he said slowly, "with the little you've got to go on?"

"Well, I thought of that possibility, but mainly I figured a murdered navy man concerned you. You're the Shore Patrol officer for Key West, and the man was found in town. That's your territory?"

"Sure, but murder's police work, not Shore Patrol! I don't have to be on the spot every time something happens out in town; that's what I've got a night crew for, at Shore Patrol headquarters."

"Calm down, Tom, this isn't like you. Your night crew's fine for the usual collection of drunk and disorderlies, but murder's not in the same category. Hell, if I'd waited till tomorrow to let you know about this, you'd have climbed all over me for not calling you sooner. What's the trouble, have a big date on, or something?"

Tom relaxed and let a sheepish smile replace his peevish look. "Okay, Pete, I guess you hit it right. Betty and I thought we'd finally be able to spend an undisturbed Friday evening." He shrugged, then went around the screen to the sheet-draped table. Pete and the Medical Officer followed, walking around to the other side of the table. Tom nodded down at the covered body.

"What makes you think he was murdered?"

Pete was startled at the question. "Huh? Oh, I forgot, you haven't seen him," he said. He grasped a corner of the sheet and whipped it off.

Unprepared, Tom stared at the body. The pallor of the trunk contrasted with the redness of the arms and the ugly blue-black of the face. Shocked at the sudden confrontation, still he had time to notice flakes of dried skin peeling from the arms and forehead before he had to turn away. With his eyes tightly shut, he stood still and swallowed hard. Finally, he opened his eyes to glare accusingly at Pete, who had moved away from the table after replacing the sheet.

"Damn it, Pete, you know what I go through whenever I see something like that! You could have at least given me a little time to get adjusted to the idea before I looked."

Pete spread his hands, palms up. "Murder's seldom pretty, Tom, and I think it was necessary for you to see him. I'm sorry, but he's not too bad for a strangulation. Usually, the eyes and tongue protrude a little more."

"All right, you've made your point. It's one reason I've hated this job right from the start. This is no place for a sailor; I want to get back to the submarine force."

Pete smiled. "Like it or not, you're stuck with the job, though. And it does seem to me that the Patrol runs a little better than it did before you took it." More businesslike, Pete gestured at the table, ignoring Tom's look of disgust at his remark. "Recognize him?"

"No, in the short time I looked, I didn't. Wait a minute!" he added hastily, as Pete reached for the sheet, "I've already seen too much of him. Let's look at his clothes, now."

The Duty Medical Officer excused himself, to make his hospital rounds, while Pete and Tom went to the chair on which the dead Chief's clothes had been folded. As Castro had warned, Tom was unable to find any identification in the clothing. Still, the uniform was the only lead to the man's identity, so far.

Determined to extract as much information as possible from the soiled khakis, Tom studied the coat carefully. A few loose threads, and two areas where the material was darker than the rest of the coat, marked the spots on the left sleeve from which the rating badge and the service stripes had been torn. On the left breast were three rows of ribbons; just above them were two pinholes, about two inches apart. Holding the coat close to his face, Tom sniffed, then glanced across the material at Pete. After a quick inventory of the ribbons, he folded the coat and replaced it on the chair.

"Where was he found?"

"In the front yard of an abandoned house on Whitehead Street. One of the neighbors found him; said he was listening to the eight-fifty-five news on WKWF when he heard a car drive up outside.

The car doors opened, there were a few grunts, a sound of breaking underbrush, and a thud. Then he heard the doors slam and the car drove off. After the news broadcast, the guy's curiosity got the better of him; he went out to see what it was all about, and found the body."

"Weren't there any other witnesses?"

"Haven't dug up any, so far. The one we have didn't see the car, and can't say how many people were involved. Judging from the sound of it, he says, there was only one person. It's not much to go on, but it fixes a time to work from."

"Did this man hear any arguing, or any sounds of a struggle?"

"Nope; the doctor says the Chief had been dead for a couple of hours when he was found. He'll try to pin down the time of death later on, when he has time for an autopsy."

Thoughtfully, Tom rummaged through the small pile of accessories that had been in the Chief's possession. He paused once or twice for a closer look as something caught his eye. The inspection completed, he stood quietly for a couple of minutes before turning to Pete.

"Let's go," he said. "If we can get this over with soon enough, I'll still be able to see Betty tonight." He started to walk briskly out of the room. Pete gaped at him, then grabbed his arm.

"Whoa, Sherlock! Where do you get this 'Let's go' business? You just told me you can't identify him; what makes you think we might finish this up so soon?"

Tom stopped, returning his friend's critical look calmly. "I don't know the man, Pete, and I don't know who murdered him, but I think I've got an idea on how to get going. If my guess is right, I know where to find someone who might have killed him."

"Who was it? I'll put out a pick-up order on him, in case we don't find him."

Tom shook his head. "I can't tell you. I said I don't know who he is, but there's a good chance he's at the Old Timer's Club right now."

Pete sank onto a stool next to an enameled desk. His shoulders slumped and the fingers of one hand drummed idly on the desktop, while he shook his head from side to side.

"I'm sorry, Tom. You know I've a lot of confidence in you, but this is a little too much for me to swallow. I'm confused, Tom. You don't know him, but you know where to find his killer; except you don't know who the killer is, either."

Tom nodded with half a smile. "That's about right."

"I know you wish you were doing something else, but don't take that out on me. If this is the best you can offer, I'll just excuse myself, apologize for disturbing your precious evening, and see what I can do about this killing."

Tom waved him into silence. "Don't get me wrong, Pete. I'm

resigned to the job; I just went a little too fast for you. Let me go through it step by step, and I think I can convince you. Okay?"

"It better be pretty good."

"It's good enough for a start, but not enough to base an arrest on. First, I noticed he'd only been in Key West a couple of days. Then I . . ."

"Hold it," said Pete, "you just lost me."

"His arms and forehead were peeling from a fresh sunburn, but his body was still white. If he'd been around here any length of time, he should have been tanned, or at least evenly burned."

"Sounds reasonable; go on."

"Secondly, the man was a submariner."

"Who says?"

"It shows. This is one area where my knowledge is a little more specialized than yours. Those pinholes in his coat, above the ribbons, were made either by wings or by a submarine qualification pin."

"Qualification pin? You mean dolphins?"

"Sure. Just like mine, here, only his would have been silver, instead of gold. We can eliminate wings right away, because his uniform smells like a submariner's."

"You people have your own smell?"

"We do, unmistakeably. It comes from diesel oil and battery gas; once it gets into clothing, it takes weeks of airing to get rid of it. As long as a uniform's being worn around one of the boats, it'll smell like a submarine. I spotted it on this one as soon as I picked it up."

"I noticed it, but it didn't mean a thing to me."

"Okay; so far, we're pretty sure he was a new arrival on one of the local subs. That narrows the field a lot. Now, look at the tie clip. Actually, it's a small pencil, shaped like a torpedo. Even has a propellor on it, see?"

"What does that prove? I've seen those things in half a dozen local stores. Anyone that wants one can get one."

"That's true, but hardly anyone but Torpedomen do get them. It's almost like a fraternity pin with them. I'd guess this fellow was a Chief Torpedoman, and was probably Chief of the Boat on the submarine he was assigned to."

"I'm not up on this navy jargon, Tom. What's this Chief of the Boat, and why should it be this man?"

"The Chief of the Boat is the top enlisted man on a submarine. He's the real boss of the crew at the working level, and handles a lot of details for the Executive Officer. A good one can take a big load of work and worry off the Exec's shoulders. Usually, he's a Chief Torpedoman, but not always. With the amount of service this Chief had, though, he'd probably get the job."

"How do you know how much

service he had? His hash marks are gone."

"That yellow ribbon, with the little red, white, and blue stripes at each end, shows he was in the service before the attack on Pearl Harbor. How much before, I can't say, but any Chief with twenty years of service is likely to be senior to the other Chiefs on his boat. When they get that much time in, they're usually looking for shore duty near their home town, so they can finish out their twenty years and retire. You won't find many of them still at sea."

"Well, suppose you're right in all this. How do we find out what boat he was on?"

"Easy enough to ask, tomorrow, who has a Chief missing. Tonight, though, the *Starfish* is our best starting point."

Pete raised his eyebrows. "Ten submarines based here, and you decide on one in particular?"

"He was found just before nine. The *Starfish* asked me earlier this week to furnish two Shore Patrolmen for their ship's party tonight, at the Old Timer's Club. The party started at nine."

"You're trying to push a coincidence too far."

"I don't think so, Pete. I think whoever put the body in that yard made all the noise he did to insure the body would be found soon. I'd say he made a deliberate effort to help establish the time. Don't forget, he'd killed the man much earlier. He could have gone halfway to Miami to dump the body; he didn't need to thrash around on Whitehead Street to do it."

"Well, why didn't he go up the Keys to do it?"

"Probably because he couldn't produce an alibi to cover that part of the afternoon, but could rig one for nine o'clock." Tom pulled out a cigarette, lit it, and blew a cloud of smoke out over Castro's head. "Unless you can think of a more plausible story, we ought to get going. I'll need a ride; I sent my car and driver back to the base when I saw your car outside."

"Come along. I'll make a detour past the spot where he was found, and we can time the trip from there in to the club."

Neither spoke during the ride along Roosevelt Boulevard toward town. In the light traffic, the trip from one end of the island to the other took only a few minutes. As they pulled into the parking lot outside the Old Timer's Club, Tom looked at his watch.

"Three minutes from Whitehead Street, without traffic."

Pete nodded. "Nine o'clock, then. We can pretty well eliminate anyone who arrived before then from our list of suspects."

A sailor stopped them at the door. "Sorry, gentlemen, this is a private party tonight."

"I know," Tom said. "I'd like to speak to your commanding officer."

The sailor turned away, return-

ing shortly with a stocky, balding young man in hounds-tooth checked sport coat and plaid slacks. The newcomer grinned broadly on seeing Tom. "Hey, Tom," he shouted, "come on in; be my guest." Gripping Tom's hand in an enthusiastic handshake, he glanced over toward Pete. "Who's your friend, here?"

Tom managed to free his hand while he introduced them. "This is Charlie Brookland, Pete, skipper of the *Starfish*. He always dresses this way when he's not in uniform."

Charlie grinned even more, eyes nearly disappearing in the folds of displaced skin. "Yeah, I like to get away from the job when I'm not on the boat. Figure this is about as far from the uniform as I can get. 'Course, some of the people around here don't really appreciate a good-looking outfit like this. Had to go clear to Miami Beach to get these!"

"Isn't that the outfit that got you into trouble up at Hialeah, Charlie?" asked Tom, steering him toward an eddy in the crowd. Charlie gave an embarrassed cough, and was about to retort when Tom got to the evening's business.

"How's the party going, Charlie, anything unusual happen?"

"Oh, hell, Tom, you know a ship's party. They get a little raucous and pretty noisy, but it's all harmless. You here on account of all that screaming and shouting earlier in the evening?"

"No, but what was it all about?"

"Oh, you know how women get when the lights go out unexpectedly. Somebody pulled the club's main power switch just after we got going; it was only off a couple of minutes, but everyone was a little excited while it was dark."

He took a quick look around and gave the two a sly wink. "Maybe two or three of those screams were my fault, Tom. Just couldn't pass up such a good opportunity."

Tom and Pete exchanged amused looks. "No, Charlie, that wasn't what brought us here," Tom said. "We wanted to find out a little about your Chief of the Boat."

Charlie lost his happy look, and scowled toward the bar at the far end of the room. "What's that no-good done now, mugged somebody?"

Pete snorted. "He must have made quite an impression in the short time he's been here."

"Short time, my foot. That slippery snake's been aboard three years, now. Say, what's the trouble, anyhow?"

"We'll get to that in a minute, Charlie. First, how about filling in some background for us? Were you replacing him for some reason?"

"Hell, yes, we're replacing him! That seagoing Shylock's turned his job into a racket. I sent for a replacement as soon as I found out what was going on."

"What was that?"

"Well, he was running the old

six for five, for one thing."

Pete interrupted. "Six for five?"

"Loan shark stuff," Tom explained, "and the most vicious. He loans someone five dollars, and gets back six the next payday. As long as the loan isn't paid off, it keeps going up, with twenty percent added the first and fifteenth of each month, or whenever payday happens to fall."

Pete whistled. "That sounds like a real money-maker. How come the men don't go to a bank or a loan office?"

"Usually, they don't want enough to make it worth while for a legitimate loan agency. Besides, most of them don't discover they're short until liberty time, and that's late afternoon."

"That alone would have been enough to sour us on him," Charlie said, "but he had a couple of other little habits that clinched it. He ran a friendly poker game for some of our young bachelors—crooked as they come. Usually, he had them cleaned before they left the ship on payday. And, if they still wanted to play, he'd take an IOU, payable the next payday. He was real generous with those guys, though; for them, he didn't start the six for five until after the next payday."

"How come no one complained?" Tom asked. "That sort of stuff usually gets squashed fast, once it's brought to light."

"This guy's pretty smart. He left the older men alone, the ones that know their way around. You know how their attitude is: they figure it's not their business to report things they aren't hurt by. And the Chief had the young ones sold on the idea it wouldn't do any good to squawk, but it might do a lot of harm."

"How long had this been going on?"

"Lord only knows, Tom. A year, two years."

"I can't believe it."

"You will, after you've seen Bull Watters. He's capable of anything, and looks it. All he had to do was hint what would happen to the first one who spilled anything—they kept quiet. It was just luck that we stumbled onto it."

"Somebody got up the nerve to complain?"

"No; a fairly new kid on board asked the Exec how to get a Navy Relief loan, but wouldn't tell him why he needed it. Finally, he broke down and admitted he'd lost his next couple of months' pay in a poker game, and the Chief wanted a down payment. He didn't know what he might be letting himself in for; the Bull hadn't explained things to him yet. Well, that got us started. We checked the kid's story with some of the other men on board, and got all we needed to bounce him."

"No cracked heads, yet?"

Charlie shook his head. "We haven't told the Bull we're on to him. He knows his relief is here,

and thinks he's got about two weeks to get to New London, but that's all. We've promised to protect everyone who gave us information."

Tom was puzzled. "How come you're just bouncing him? With what you've found, seems to me you could ask for a General Court, and get him what he deserves."

"He'll get that, all right. We had to make sure our case was airtight, first. If we couldn't make it stick, we were afraid someone'd get hurt. But we're all set now. We've got enough on Watters to convince three separate courts without repeating any testimony. If that doesn't get him convicted, I'll turn in my uniform."

"Why isn't he restricted to the ship while you're getting ready for the trial?"

"I already told you, he doesn't know we're onto him. He's got a pile of money out, and we want to catch him off balance. Soon as he turns his job over to the new man tomorrow, we arrest him and throw him in the brig, awaiting trial. We're going to be very careful to give him all his rights before and during the trial; they won't be able to throw out his conviction on those grounds. All he'll miss out on is his money. We'll have him locked up so fast, he won't have a chance to collect from anyone."

"Well, I hope all your work won't go to waste, Charlie, but we may end up taking him off your hands."

Charlie squinted at Tom. "You have, maybe, a better set of charges?"

Tom shrugged. "I don't know yet. Is your new Chief here tonight?"

"Why, I thought . . . " Charlie looked around the room, scratching his head. "Come to think of it, I haven't seen him here."

"Well, has he been in Key West long?"

"Gosh, no. Came out of that ungodly New London weather about three days ago. Take his shirt off, he still looks like a fishbelly. Why?"

"An unidentified Chief was found murdered this evening, in town. We think he may be yours." Rapidly, Tom explained the situation.

Charlie shook his head mournfully. "The description fits him, Tom. Hardy looked like a real topnotcher, too. I asked ComSubLant for the best there was; we deserved a good one after Watters." Charlie looked down the smoky room toward the bar. "If he didn't know what we were about to do, how would he figure to benefit by Hardy's death? Even if he did know, I don't see what good it would do him to kill his own relief."

Tom put a hand on Brookland's shoulder. "We don't know that he did, Charlie. In fact, until you, or someone else who knew him goes out to make the identification, we don't even know that it's Hardy who was murdered."

Charlie perked up and started to smile again. "By golly, that's right. Tell you what; I'll go out myself and take a look. Shouldn't take me more'n about half an hour." He reached into his pocket for his car keys, and turned toward the door.

"One moment, Charlie," Pete called after him. Charlie turned. "Let my driver take you. He'll be faster, and I think you'll be safer."

Charlie thought for a moment, then the puzzled look on his face turned to inspiration. "That's right," he said. "Say, you don't suppose one of your boys could drive me back to the BOQ after the party, do you? I could really have a time, if I didn't have to drive."

"I'll let you know," Pete said.

Tom turned to the man nearest him. "Where can I find Chief Watters?" he asked.

"He's down there at the bar," the sailor answered. "That's him, right in the middle—the one-man crowd standing all alone."

Tom looked around the room for his Shore Patrolmen, who had been at the party all evening. Beckoning to them, he turned to Castro and said, "I'll have my men stand by near us while we talk to him. He might be a little trouble, if he's the one we want."

Pete squinted at the bar, trying to see through the haze of cigarette smoke that hung in the room. "A *little* trouble?" he said. "From here, it looks like he could stand off the whole Key West police force, if he wanted to."

"We'll cross that bridge later. Right now, all we have to do is talk to him."

Before starting for the bar, the two made a quick study of the room's layout. The door they had entered was the only open entrance to the club, though there were two more doors across the room from them. These doors, one at each end, were marked as fire exits. The long dimension of the rectangular room stretched to their right from the entrance. Through the smoke haze, they could see that most of the floor space was taken up by tables. At the near end, space for dancing had been left open in front of the bandstand, which stood along the end wall. The bar took up most of the width of the room at the far end, with a passage at each end of the bar providing access to the washrooms.

Pointing to spots at each end of the bar, Tom stationed his two Shore Patrolmen after briefing them on the situation. Tom and Pete, taking the quickest way to the bar, wove their way through the tables to the dance floor. Single file, they went along the edge of the floor, forced to dodge and duck as the dancers swung into their path, or bumped them from the rear. Finally, they got through the rows of tables in front of the bar.

Up close, Watters looked even bigger than he had seemed from a distance. Wide, he took up half

again as much space as the people on each side of him, his bulk exaggerated because of the wide berth left him. Tom, stopping behind him to take stock, guessed the Chief must be over six feet tall, with a weight approaching two-fifty. Solidly built, he'd be heavy without any sign of fat. The shiny top of his head, surrounded by curly fuzz, gave him a false look of age; Tom estimated him to be in his late thirties. Watters leaned heavily on the bar, elbows spread wide. He looked straight ahead, uninterested in the conversations going on around him. Two clusters of bar glasses were in front of him; one set full, the other empty. From time to time, he would pick up a full glass, gulp its contents, and put it aside.

Tom eased in at Watters' right, just as the bartender came to clear away the empties in front of the Chief, and set a half-dozen fresh drinks before him. Resting one elbow on the bar, Tom turned so he could face Watters, and still have a good view of the room. Watters looked steadily at Tom as he took his position. His voice was thick and raspy, but his eyes were clear when he broke the silence between them.

"You must be a guest, Commander," he speculated, "you're not ship's company." He waved at the glasses in front of him. "Have a drink?"

Tom signaled the bartender. "Thanks, Chief, ginger ale's all I'm taking tonight."

Watters glanced at Tom's SP armband with a knowing grin. "Shore Patrol, eh? Tough to have the duty when there's free booze to be had, isn't it? Anything particular on your mind, or you just looking the party over?"

"I'm here on business, Chief."

Watters' eyes widened and he leaned closer to Tom. "Yeah? What kind of business; somebody complaining about us?"

"Nothing so simple; we're looking into a murder. Chief off the *Starfish,* named Hardy."

"Yeah?" Watters' eyebrows knitted together, and the hand carrying the glass to his mouth paused in midair. "He was new on board; didn't know him too well. He was supposed to relieve me tomorrow, though, so I can go to my new job in New London." He shrugged. "Guess they'll need me on board for a while longer, now. None of those punk Chiefs on board could take over from me."

Watters tossed off his drink and reached for another. Then, watching Tom warily, he asked, "How'd it happen?"

"He was strangled, Chief, and dumped into someone's front yard. They found him around nine o'clock."

"Nine; that was about the time things got started around here." Watters' lips pursed thoughtfully. "Hey, I might be able to help you

out a little, Commander. I guess you think maybe someone off the boat did it?"

"We don't have any leads. What do you mean, maybe you can help?"

"Well, I got here a little early, a few minutes before nine. I think I could tell you who was here when I came in. Wouldn't that help?"

"It might." Tom groaned to himself. Convinced that the dead man was bound to be the *Starfish's* Chief Hardy, he was also convinced that Chief Watters made a perfect suspect. They'd gotten so far ahead of themselves on that basis, they'd have to start all over again, now. He looked closely at Watters, still hopeful that he hadn't heard correctly. "You say you got here just after nine?"

"No, sir, just before; five minutes to nine, it was; I checked my watch against the clock as I came in. I got here a few minutes early to see that everything was right. Since I'm Chief of the Boat, I have to sort of look after things, you know. Spent a lot of time here this afternoon, too, helping to get the place ready."

"I see." Tom took a long sip of his ginger ale while absorbing this news. Suddenly a thought struck him, and he glanced up at the big circular clock over the bar. The sweep second hand of the clock, which looked like a giant pocket watch, was just marking eleven as he compared it with his watch. No help there, he thought, it's right on. He looked back at Watters, and was irritated to see him grinning.

"Well, Chief, how about giving me a rundown on who was here when you arrived?"

"Sure, let me see. Well, there was the club people, of course. Then the Exec was here, Mr. Purvis, and his wife. All five of us Chiefs were here, too, and the cooks. They fixed the chow for the party. And we had five seamen for a working party—that was Franks, Barber, McDougal, Thatch, and Barnes. It was one of those that asked me, what time it was when I got here; the kid's so dumb, I had to point the clock out to him."

Tom thanked Watters and went with Pete to an empty table.

"Well," he said, "there went a beautiful theory. Guess the only thing for us to do is get the Exec to check Watters' story, then start eliminating people. Unless Charlie comes back and tells us we're in the wrong place. My guesswork was only good up to a point. I suppose it'll turn out to be someone who didn't even know Hardy; some strongarm man who only started out to rob him, but killed him when he resisted."

Pete's eyes roved over the crowd while he listened to Tom. "It could be, but I doubt it. Transporting a body that way isn't the sort of thing a street murderer would do. You showed me that, yourself.

Damn it, I was convinced it was Watters. Anyhow, we can't leave yet. Our only leads, for what they're worth, are here."

They looked up together at a slight noise at the door. Charlie Brookland had returned, pale and shaken. Completely sobered now, he sat with Tom and Pete, staring at his knuckles until he was able to speak.

"It was Hardy," he said. "Have you made any progress since I left?"

"I had a talk with Watters," Tom said. "If his story is true, he's in the clear. He got here a minute or two before the body was dumped and has been here ever since."

"That parasite hasn't told the truth in years. With his mind and his attitude, this is just the sort of thing he's been headed for." Charlie stood up. "I'm sorry fellows, but the party's over for me. After that trip to the hospital, I need some fresh air. Besides, I couldn't face Watters, thinking what I think."

"He's prejudiced," Pete said. "He's also mad because his pet bogeyman isn't a murderer to boot."

Tom found Lieutenant Purvis, the Exec, and discussed the investigation with him. They decided not to stop the party. Tom, Pete, and the two Shore Patrolmen could interview the people at their tables, and a couple of men from the ship could be posted at the doors to make sure no one left the party. As news of the tragedy spread around the room, the party grew quiet. The dancers sat down and the band quit playing. Almost everyone sat watching apprehensively as the investigators proceeded from table to table, though once in a while, someone would make a trip to the bar.

By midnight, everyone had been interviewed. The process was simpler than they had expected, because three or four of the married couples had held warmup parties earlier. As a result, all but three of the crew were accounted for immediately.

After fresh talks with the three who were not accounted for, they saw that even these three could be cleared by men from other boats, or people from local bars they had stopped at before the party. Tom and Pete finally sat alone at a table, staring glumly at one another. Pete shrugged, an eloquent, Latin shrug.

"Looks like a dead end, Tom." He tilted his chair back a little and put his hands in his pockets, while his lower lip crept up to caress his thin black mustache. He let his chair come back down, planted his elbows on the table, and looked at Tom.

"Prejudice, hunch, whatever it is, I'm not happy, Tom. Watters is too self-confident. He's too eager to prove how helpful he can be. That isn't the impression Charlie

had of him, and he knows him pretty well. Let's talk to him once more before we leave."

Watters sat down at their table, the chair protesting in loud squeaks when his full weight hit it. "Any progress, gentlemen?"

"Very little, Watters," Tom said. "Looks like we've just about cleared the whole crew. We want to clear up a couple of points, though, before we leave."

"Glad if I can help, sir."

"Fine. You got here just before the main crowd, and everyone seems to be in agreement that you were at the bar, rolling dice, until somewhere after nine."

Watters sat uneasily, forearms resting on the table, twirling a half-empty drink between his hands. "What're you driving at?"

"You might as well know," Pete said, "that you were our first suspect, until we found out when you got here. It struck us as sort of funny, though, that everyone who was here when you arrived had some recollection of your pointing out what time it was at least once between the time you got here and shortly after nine. Why were you so eager for everyone to notice what time it was when you came in?"

"I don't get you, sir. Hell, we still had some last minute things to do, and I just wanted them to know there wasn't much time left."

"So, to each one, you pointed over the bar and said, 'Look at the time.' Is that right?"

Watters shifted nervously in his seat. "What's the point, Commander? Why keep after me? I was right here when you say the body was found; you've heard that from everyone you asked. What are you trying to do, frame me?"

"I guess we are worrying about something minor, Watters," Tom admitted. "It just made us think there might be some question about the time you got here." Tom glanced at his watch. Nearly one in the morning. Wearily, he compared it once more with the clock over the bar, then stiffened in sudden recollection as he followed the bare wall down from the clock to the electric socket directly beneath it. Tom got up and walked to the bar; he leaned over it to ask the bartender a question. When the bartender nodded, he asked another and the bartender pointed toward the door to the men's washroom. Tom returned to the table with renewed confidence. He sat down in silence, and let his eyes travel slowly over Watters' face, down his arms, stopping finally at the powerful hands. After a quick glance around to make sure his Shore Patrolmen were close at hand, he looked again deep into Watters' eyes. Watters said nothing, but sat quietly, waiting for Tom to speak.

"Watters, the main power switch for the club is near the men's washroom. Did you pull it earlier, when the lights went out?"

Watters' eyes widened, and he grew red in the face. "Say, what is this, anyhow?" he said. "What're you trying to pull?"

Pete was puzzled by the question. "What's the light switch got to do with it, Tom?"

"He's been lying to us, Pete. He's your man."

Roaring, Watters exploded into action. He stood up, throwing the table onto Tom and Pete with one hand, and reaching to the next table for a beer bottle with the other. Brandishing the bottle over his head, he stepped back.

"You can't prove it!" he shouted. "I was here before nine; everybody saw me."

Tom and Pete crouched behind their table, ready to rush Watters. The bottle came flying toward Tom and he dodged, but not fast enough to keep it from smashing his shoulder, throwing him off balance. Watters braced himself as the Shore Patrolmen came rushing in. With flying fists, he sent them tumbling over tables, crashing into other people as they fell. Screams ripped the air as Watters headed for the door, knocking over tables and chairs in his rush, and sending people sprawling to the floor.

Tom lunged to his feet and threw himself at Watters. Ex-football player though he was, he'd never thrown a block at anyone as solid on his feet as this Chief. Tom bounced off the huge man and landed in a heap on the floor as Watters raised one foot. Rolling fast, Tom missed the full force of the kick, but felt a stabbing pain as ribs cracked under the impact.

Pete, unwilling to draw his gun in the crowd, jumped Watters from behind. He got a forearm under the Chief's chin and began levering, trying to cut off his wind. Watters roared again, grabbed the arm and bent forward violently, sending Pete flying over a table to land against a wall.

Panting, aching in the chest and shoulder, Tom went in again from the front while his Patrolmen each went for an arm. Watters was pinioned just as Tom's head hit him in the solar plexus, and the burly Chief went down.

"Quick," Tom gasped, "get the cuffs on him and truss him up—use his belt."

Staggering slightly, still dazed, Pete joined Tom in time to see Watters' eyes open. With a groan, he tried to get up and found he couldn't. He lay there, glowering at the crowd and muttering obscene threats while they waited for the squad car to arrive.

Pete limped to a table and let himself down into a chair. Tom, exhausted, sat across from him.

"Sorry I wasn't any more help," Pete said. "It happened so fast, it caught me off guard."

"For a second, I didn't think I was going to last any longer than you. Took three of us to get him down, finally."

"I still don't get it. What did you think of all of a sudden?"

"Well, it was something that should have been obvious to me right from the beginning, Pete. When the officers on any submarine make an investigation the size of their investigation of Watters, they should know better than to think they can conceal it from the man involved. Even though Watters was able to keep his doings from them for a couple of years, they couldn't keep their secret from him for more than five minutes. I'll bet it works out the same way in any large organization; the bosses live in a fishbowl, but the men working for them have all sorts of things going that the bosses don't know about."

"Maybe so, but still, why should Watters kill a man he hardly knew?"

"Watters was in a tight spot. He knew what was coming, and wanted to stop it. This scheme was pretty desperate, but then, so was Watters. He didn't want to go to prison; who does? He figured that if he could get away with the killing, things would be in such turmoil they'd postpone sending him to the brig on these other charges. That would give him a chance to collect as much money as he could on Monday. With his money in hand, he could leave town. After all, it's the same prison, whether you're there for extortion or desertion. It would have been better all around if he'd pulled out earlier, but I guess if you've got money working for you at six for five, there's a temptation to hold on until the last possible minute. Watters held on too long."

"All right, I'll grant you've given him a motive. Even so, he'd pretty well established his presence here when the body was left in that front yard."

"A few minutes leeway was all he needed. If he'd had the clock set slow, he could get the alibi. He had a chance to take care of that this afternoon when he was here getting the party set up. But then I remembered checking the clock against my watch a couple of times, and it was right on, so that left me in a dead end. Then, I remembered the power failure, so I decided to check with the bartender."

"Aha," Pete said, "of course. By cutting the power, he had a ready-made explanation for the clock being slow." He paused, uncertain. "But, if that's so, what could you gain by asking the bartender about resetting the clock?"

"As soon as he told me he'd had to reset it, I knew it had been tampered with."

"But, Tom, if the power went off, the clock would have stopped and gotten even further behind than Watters had set it."

"Not this clock, Pete. Take a look at it. It's electric, sure, but it's one of the new cordless ones. It runs on batteries."

*(Continued from other side)*

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